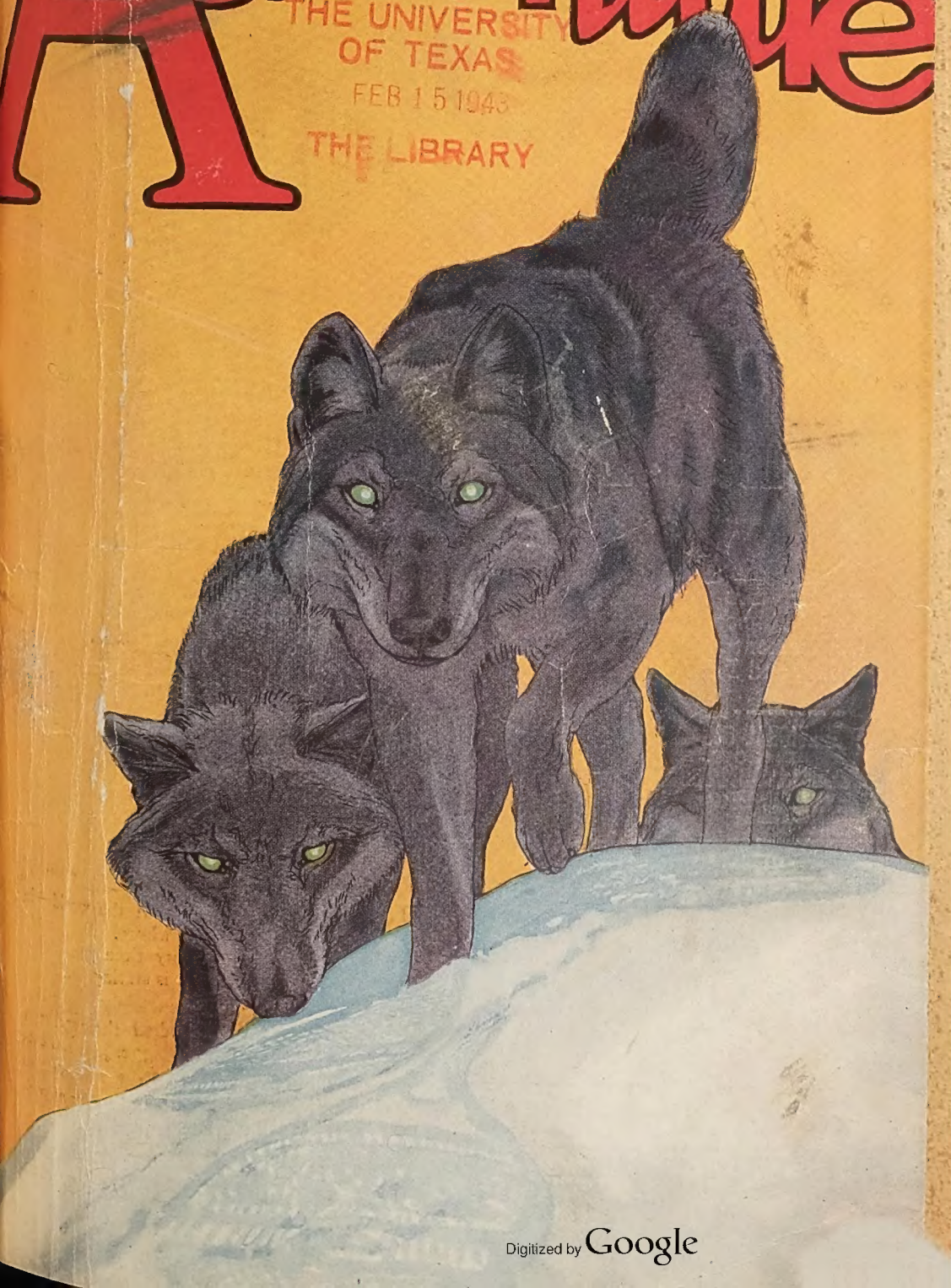
ENBER

PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS
FEB 15 1943
THE LIBRARY



Digitized by Google

"Don't tell me you never had a chance!

"Four years ago you and I worked at the same bench. We were *both* discontented. Remember the noon we saw the International Correspondence Schools' advertisement? That woke me up. I realized that to get ahead I needed special training, and I decided to let the I. C. S. help me. When I marked the coupon I asked you to sign with me. You said, 'Aw, forget it!'

"I made the most of my opportunity and have been climbing ever since. You had the same chance I had, but you turned it down. No, Jim, you can't expect more money until you've trained yourself to handle bigger work."

There are lots of "Jims" in the world—in stores, factories, offices, everywhere. Are *you* one of them? Wake up! Every time you see an I. C. S. coupon your chance is staring you in the face. Don't turn it down.

Right now over one hundred thousand men are preparing themselves for bigger jobs and better pay through I. C. S. courses.

You can join them and get in line for promotion. Mark and mail this coupon, and find out how.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2018, Scranton, Pa.

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2018, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position or in the subject, before which I mark X.

- ☐ ELECTRICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Electric Lighting
- ☐ Electric Car Running
- ☐ Electric Wiring
- ☐ Telegraph Expert
- ☐ Practical Telephony
- ☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Gas Engineer
- ☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER
- ☐ Metallurgist or Prospector
- ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
- ☐ Marine Engineer
- ☐ ARCHITECT
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING
- ☐ Sheet Metal Worker
- ☐ CHEMICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ SALESMANSHIP
- ☐ ADVERTISING MAN
- ☐ Window Trimmer
- ☐ Show Card Writer
- ☐ Outdoor Sign Painter
- ☐ RAILROADER
- ☐ ILLUSTRATOR
- ☐ DESIGNER
- ☐ BOOKKEEPER
- ☐ Stenographer and Typist
- ☐ Cert. Public Accountant
- ☐ Railway Accountant
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ GOOD ENGLISH
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Common School Subjects
- ☐ CIVIL SERVICE
- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
- ☐ AGRICULTURE
- ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
- ☐ Navigator
- ☐ Poultry Raising
- ☐ AUTOMOBILES
- ☐ Auto Repairing
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ German
- ☐ French
- ☐ Italian

Name _____

Occupation & Employer _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

If name of Course you want is not in this list, write it below.

Digitized by Google

THE LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS

BOUND MAY 1943

Vol. 15
No. 4

November 18, 1917

Published Twice a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President — GEORGE B. MALLON, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York City
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered at the New York Post-Office as Second-Class Matter

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

CONTENTS FOR MID-NOVEMBER ISSUE, 1917

The Wave Bound *A Complete Novel* . . . . . **Samuel Alexander White** 3

An unceasing battle with the elements—sometimes with men. That's the life of the sturdy fisherfolk off the Newfoundland Banks. A tale that will make your nostrils tingle with the salt of the sea.

Cows Is Cows . . . . . **W. C. Tuttle** 56

Piperock is peeved with *Sheriff Magpie Simpkins*. Cattle rustlers are on the job yet the jail remains empty. So Piperock brings in outside detective help. Remarkable disclosures follow fast—but they will hardly keep pace with your laughs.

The Strength of Gregson . . . . . **Robert J. Pearsall** 67

Adventure has a way of popping into the most prosaic of lives. *Young Gregson*, automobile repairer, meets it under most unusual circumstances.

Night Herding *Poem* . . . . . **Ira South** 72

The Bearer of Belts . . . . . **Hugh Pendexter** 73

What is better than a good old Indian tale—one of the days when our country was in the making? Here is history with an unsung hero.

Hira Singh's Tale *A Four-Part Story. Part III* . . . . . **Talbot Mundy** 79

Sit beside *Hira Singh* and listen to his tale of loyalty, courage and determination—of a battle-scarred Indian regiment fighting its way through enemy country in Asia Minor. The third instalment of this great war serial. The first two parts are briefly retold in story form.

The Bridging of Malbert Swamp . . . . . **James Francis Dwyer** 101

The bones of *"Daredevil" Matt Galt*, trail-finder of the pioneer West, lie in the unconquered black slime of Malbert Swamp. But he has left a son, *Darrell Galt*, railroad president, who vows to span a steel trail where his father had failed. You will judge as to his success.

The Sourdough Twins' Last Cleanup . . . . . **Robert Russell Strang** 109

It is thirty long years since the adventurous *Sourdough Twins* blazed a trail to fortune in the headwaters of the Yukon. But they failed to save during the fat years. It is as old men that they face the lean years—but like true Alaskan pioneers.

The Wise Man . . . . . **Hapsburg Liebe** 116

A million dollars in diamonds, pearls and rubies may sometimes be a great temptation to a man—particularly if he is a soldier of fortune in Mexico. *Mad Blackburn* succumbed. Read what came of it.

The King of Carados *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . **Vance Palmer** 123

Carados, a dirty, sleepy, Latin-American city, has been transformed into a thriving modern seaport. *Don Brent*, American, has single-handed worked the miracle. "King of Carados" he is called. Perhaps he takes too much pride in the title.

(Continued on next page)

Digitized by Google

(Continued from preceding page)

Darcy L... . . . . . **Clyde B. Hough** 157
The Moro country is a bad place for a lone soldier—particularly if he happens to be a deserter. But *Deserter Darcy* hardly deserves the punishment he chooses to accept. Why does he choose it?

The Lurking Poison . . . . . **Captain George B. Rodney** 161
Some people declare that the Gila monster of the Southwest is not a poisonous reptile. Here is a tale that will clear up any doubts you may have upon the subject.

The High String . . . . . **Roy P. Churchill** 169
A gun-pointer may aim high and still hit his target. This yarn of the U. S. Navy will tell you how his hit may be effective in more ways than one.

The Camp-Fire A Free-to-All Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers 177

Adventure's Free Services and Addresses 186

Ask Adventure 187

Lost Trails 191

Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . . **Edward Hopper**

Cover Design . . . . . **Charles Livingston Bull**

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

The First-December issue on the stands in two weeks—November 3—will give you the first instalment of:

CLAYMORE *A Four-Part Serial*
By ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH
A tale of the good old swashbuckling days in romantic Scotland

PIKERS AFLOAT *A Complete Novelette*
By WALT MacDOUGALL
Something new in the way of adventure on the high seas—with a generous sprinkling of laughs

For other features in the coming number, turn to the Trail Ahead, page 192

FIRST DECEMBER ISSUE

Published Twice a Month **Yearly Subscription, $3.00 in advance** **Single Copy, Fifteen Cents**
Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Canadian postage, 60 cents.
Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1917, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain.
The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Digitized by Google

Adventure

November 18, 1917

Vol. 15 No. 4

THE WAVE BOUND

A Complete Novel by Samuel Alexander White

Author of "The Spoilsman," "The Ocean-Borne," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE SCHOOLING

Woe, woe to those whom the islands pen,
  In vain they shun the double capes;
Cruel are the reefs of Magdalen;
  The Wolf's white fang what prey escapes?
The Grindstone grinds the bones of some,
And Coffin Island is craped with foam;
  On Deadman's shores are fearful shapes.

"SCHOOL o' herrin', Cap'n Taylor!" the lookout at the masthead of the schooner *Lady Fair* shouted down to the fog-hidden deck below him.

"Where away, Brown?" demanded Taylor, moving his oilskinned figure in the blur of the brownish Newfoundland sea mist and trying to stare up at his unseen lookout perched high in the clear air above the fog stratum.

"Jist off'n York Harbor thar, Cap'n. The rise o' the sun's silverin' the rovin' beggars naow. The sun'll strike us in a minnit or two, an' then ye kin see 'em aout yaonder fer yourself."

Taylor, brawniest of all his brawny crew, turned to the nearest of that crew, his mate Hughie Hay standing almost unseen at his elbow—so thick was the murk that drove and writhed inboard and outboard like a host of fat-bodied water serpents awaking with the dawn.

"Waiting a whole week, Hughie, and they couldn't school any day but Sunday!" he growled. "What do you know about that, eh?"

The mate leaned over till he felt the captain's elbow in his ribs.

"I knaow ez haow the herrin' is a plumb erratic fish, an' ez haow this seekin' o' froze bait is a plumb erratic bizness. Who on the curve o' the consarned waters started it, anyway?"

"Why, Captain Harry Smith of Gloucester, Hughie! Didn't you ever hear the story?"

"Kin't say ez I ever did—rightly," confessed Hughie. "I've heerd a lot o' tales

Copyright, 1917, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

o' every kind o' fish an' fishers on these coasts, but I don't remember the start o' the froze-herrin' trade among 'em."

"It was away back in '54," recounted Taylor. "That was the year of the Reciprocity Treaty and quite a while before my time, but you ought to remember it, Hughie."

"Warn't it reciprocity give us free use o' all Bridish waters? Yep, that wuz in yer father's time, Walter—I mean Cap'n. I wuz a lump o' a lad fishin' with him aout o' Glo'ster in his schooner *Graywing*."

"Yes, that was the year. Before that we never had free use of the waters, so Captain Harry Smith came up on the south coast for halibut. He couldn't find them, so he filled up with cod and frozen-herrings and when he got home to Gloucester he sold some to three Bankers bound for the Grand Banks. It was grand bait. That's how the trade started, and that's why you and I are here this minute like blind men in a fog. It was Rose Blanche that Smith came to in the first. But Fortune Bay and Placentia Bay played out—or maybe the schools of herring developed a taste for wider roving as you hint, Hughie. Anyway there aren't many taken except here in Bay of Islands and Bonne Bay up yonder."

Taylor nodded with a blurry nod to the northward into the blankness of the mist. Like ghosts therein they were talking, phantom man to phantom man, their voices sounding with a weird, muffled hollowness, the strangle of the rippling water on the *Lady Fair's* bows mingling with the slatting of a sail or the creaking of a sheet.

"Wonderful bait for the Winter trips!" the captain went on. "Or you may bet I wouldn't have waited here a whole week!"

"Well, mebbe we'll wait another week," lamented Hughie, trying to pierce the murk with his aged, puckered eyes. "Them Terra Novans is strict abaout their fishin' laws, an' any school o' herrin' I ever seen was too cantankerous to last over till Monday."

"By the bones of Cabot, we won't wait another day!" Taylor rapped out. "I won't stand by and see bread drift past the mouths of my men even if it is Sunday. It's a case of hard necessity, Hughie, and we can't wait. Unless it's a mighty small school and not worth bothering with. We'll know in forty crisp seconds. Here's the sun at last!"

The crimson morning sun drank up the curling vapor from the thirty-five mile fiord of the Bay of Islands wherein they lay. First in the rugged line of the west coast they caught the soaring of Mount Blomidon's black peak over two thousand feet in air cleft with its sheer rock precipices, ribboned with its silvery hundred-foot waterfalls.

Then the lower whale-backed Laurentian hills walled up, bulking cobalt blue against the carmine skyline, covered with moss bearded spruce and December-yellowed birch and smeared with the amber smear of the bake apple and the scarlet flame of the partridge berry.

Buttressing the hill slopes, the sheer basaltic cliffs took form, their lichened granite faces glinting in a weird medley of colors: bronze, greenish gray, pink and vermilion. While from the foot of the arch hollowed, cavern-bored rim rocks, interspersed with their flat pebbled beaches, the surface of the bay unrolled like a scroll before their eyes.

Rare, matchless Mediterranean blue it shimmered, indented with three twenty-mile inland arms, the North Arm, the Middle Arm and the Humber Arm which received the flow of the mighty Humber River, studded with countless islets and speckled with ice hummocks and the sails of the *Lady Fair* and scores of other American fishing-schooners. As the last wisp of fog off the land rolled seaward to still hang in heavy banks about Lark Harbor and South Head, the sun struck the sails, flashing from them magic color changes with every slant of the canvas.

In many rigs the schooners rode, in the old double head-sail rig, in the more modern knockabout rig, some with topmasts, some without, Grant's *Evening Star*, Robinson's *Siren*, Gray's *Pride of Haarlem*, Fletcher's *Mary Bedford*, Thompson's *Light o' Dawn*, and all the rest up from Gloucester, Newburyport, Provincetown, Boston and other ports, their skippers as anxious as Walter Taylor for the elusive herring to school so as to provide them with bait and as chagrined as he that they had chosen Sunday for their landward visit.

Dead ahead and a little beyond Seal Island Taylor marked the school, for now that the mist was gone seaward it needed not the masthead and the binoculars to spot them.

The lookout Brown had descended from

Digitized by Google

his perch to the deck, and he and the rest of the crew joined the mate and the captain to stare at the waters of York Harbor. Beyond the channel they saw the herring massed in a great school, packed so close that the topmost fish splashed the surface into spray.

"By Heavens, acres of them!" blurted Taylor to the crew. "And not a boat of Jacques Beauport putting off from shore, though his crews haven't taken a fin this week. By the chin whiskers of Neptune, Hughie, he has to take them as usual and sell to us or I'll take them myself. Lower a dory till I go and see him! Yes, and you may as well unlash all the dories while you're at it. I think we'll have use for them in any case."

Irish Kerrigan, Boston Jim and Patterson sprang to the leeward nest of dories, Brown, Tom Halifax and Scotty McCaig to the windward nest—blooded Banks men all, chafing and freting through a week of inactivity and eager to let their pent-up energy loose in the first task that had been assigned them since making the Bay of Islands.

With deft hands they flipped off the ringbolt lashings that prevented the nested boats being swept off the deck of the *Lady Fair* in the heavy gales of the Newfoundland waters, when the schooner ran roaring torrents from stem to stern.

"All av wan week, ye mind!" growled Irish Kerrigan. "An' divvle a hand have I put to a rope or an oar."

"Wall," snickered Boston Jim, "you've whistled fer fish till your teeth are outen tune, and here it luks as if they've come to hear the melodee."

He and Patterson hooked on the tackles and hauled with a heave.

The topmost dory swung up and out and descended with a smack on the waters of the Bay.

"Righto, Cap'n!" they sung out. "We'll stand by with the tackles till we hear what's what!"

CHAPTER II

PILLARS OF THE LAW

AS TAYLOR stepped into the dory and pulled away from the *Lady Fair*, the voice of Skipper Grant hailed him from the *Evening Star*.

"Walt—ho, Walt! Where you going?"

"See Jacques Beauport!" stated Taylor between two pulls.

"No good, Walt!" Grant shook his head with a bear-like motion. "It's Sunday. Newfoundlanders won't lift a hand for Beauport today, and if they would Jacques wouldn't let them."

"I know," shouted Taylor, persisting in his pulling, "but maybe he'll think, like us, that he's waited long enough to make a dollar or two. I'll see him anyway and give him the chance to do it before I take the job off his hands."

Grant made a violent gesture of disapproval, walking forward along the *Evening Star's* deck to keep Taylor's dory within hearing.

"Don't you do it, Walt," he roared his advice through the megaphone of his hands. "Cruisers always snooping round. Might get you in the act. Sit tight till tomorrow —Monday."

Taylor shook his head obstinately as he rowed on, yet in his heart he realized that Grant was right. He knew Jacques Beauport too well to expect any favor from him. The first sight of Beauport sitting smoking on the landing-stages convinced him how hollow was the observance of the usual method of seeking the frozen-herring bait.

As if expecting Taylor, Beauport sat hulked there, his dark eyes fixed upon the approaching dory, his stubble-bearded face wreathed every half minute with the smoke of his short pipe. Lying on the stages around him, leaning against the gunwales of the beached boats or lounging in the shored-up sheds that hugged the harsh crags, were many sea-booted Newfoundlanders jacketed in homespun, canvas or moleskin, and several Frenchmen in wrinkled cottonade trousers and faded blue jerseys.

Unlike any of these men in his employ, Beauport wore the Breton casque and sabots. Descended originally from one of the famous St. Malo fish merchants who yearly plied their trade in Newfoundland waters, once in the French Navy from one of whose Fishery Protection Service vessels he had deserted, and now a trade monopolist himself with a Summer station on the Magdalen Islands and a Winter station on Newfoundland and the Labrador, he clung tenaciously to the traditions and the dress of his forefathers.

"*Bon matin, Capitaine,*" he nodded with

Digitized by Google

measured malice, as Taylor nosed his boat through the muddle of dories tied about the stages. "It is a nice sunny morning to go to church."

"Church!" exploded Taylor wrathfully. "I'm no infidel myself, but I know when churchgoing should be let slide in a case of necessity like this. Beauport, there are men out on my *Lady Fair* and on the other schooners whose share in the cod catch means the daily bread in the mouths of their wives and little ones at home. They've lost a precious week waiting to buy frozen-herring bait from you, and——"

"How, *mon ami?*" interrupted Beauport sharply. "Can I make the herring school?"

"They have schooled. You're not blind, only mule stubborn. Are you going to take that bait and let these men get away?"

Beauport waved a deprecating hand.

"It is against the law, *Capitaine,*" he puffed.

"Your law?" Taylor sneered.

"The Newfoundland fishing law. *Comment?* I appeal to *Messieurs les Terre Neuviens.* I appeal to you, Codroy John."

Thus directly addressed, Codroy John, a bearded Newfoundlander, stony of face, with the fathomless blue eyes of a prophet, rolled over from where he lay on his elbow on the stage and sat up, his ponderous legs dangling above the water.

"Aye, it be against our law," he boomed, "and a wonderful sinful thing ye proposes, Captain Taylor."

"Oh, blazes!" groaned Taylor. "I'm not talking to you Terra Novans. I know you're religious to fanaticism. I know it's against your principles to take fish on Sunday. I'm not quarreling with you there. But Beauport has enough of his own race here to drop a net."

"*Oui,* but I refuse, *Capitaine,*" spat Beauport. "Besides—" pointing to his steamer anchored off the farther cove—"I am done with fishing here for the season and tomorrow I am taking my sealer *Blavet* to St. John's to overhaul her for the sealing trip in March. So I may not drop another net till then."

"All right, I've warned you," raged Taylor. "If there's any inquiry, you'll do the answering and take the consequences. We'll take the fish ourselves."

"*Tiens, capitaine,*" reminded Beauport pulling himself erect upon the stage and gesturing with his pipe-stem, "Americans have not the right to take herring within the bays or harbors, and that is where you are now."

"Americans have the right," contradicted Taylor flatly. He stepped up on the seat of his dory on a level with Beauport, facing him swiftly, eye to eye. "The Reciprocity Treaty of eighteen hundred and fifty-four and the Treaty of Washington in eighteen hundred seventy-one gave it to them. Only, we've never used the right. We've always been content to buy what we needed from men like you. But, by Heaven today we're going to use our right, you cursed jack-o'-tar!" (Navy deserter.)

"Oh! You are, are you?—You *diable* son of a pirate."

Taylor's weather-bronzed face flooded a deep red.

He leaped from dory seat to landing-stage and smote as he leaped, his knotted fist catching Beauport flush upon the forehead and dropping him flat upon the boards.

The Frenchman was on his feet again like a cat, a long knife in his hand, but a dozen of his own men seized his arms and Codroy John and others of the Newfoundlanders blocked the enraged Taylor back from him.

For a moment they glared silently at each other, two strong men of the sea, Taylor six feet tall, two hundred pounds in weight, in the prime of his twenty-seven years; Beauport full twenty years his senior but his equal in weight and strength, with the litheness and suppleness that the tiger-like sprawl of the surges had bred in his short, thick, powerful frame.

Only an instant, then Beauport nodded blackly to the crowd of his own men who held his arms.

"Thanks, *mes amis,*" he growled. "It is well you were quick enough or *Capitaine* Taylor would have taken no more fish this side of the steaming river of Hell!"

The men loosed their grip, and Beauport with a glint of his white teeth sheathed his long knife somewhere under his casque.

Codroy John and the rest of the Newfoundlanders stepped aside out of Taylor's way, and Taylor without a word slid into his dory and pulled back toward the *Lady Fair.*

With long strokes that crashed the dory through the water he pulled, the strengh of the muscles set to crush Beauport, knife and all going into the strain of the work.

Over his shoulder he glanced toward the

Digitized by Google

spot where he had seen the herring schooling and glimpsed the silver shoal still sporting on the blue surface. On the stages ashore Beauport had resumed his puffing at his pipe again. Codroy John was sprawling as before, his huge body recumbent on the planks and his prophetic eyes following the retreating dory.

It seemed that the matter was decided. According to their reasoning, there remained no possibility of Taylor's getting any bait. In any event he could not under the law get bait till the next day, and Jacques Beauport in his secret heart had determined that he should get no bait at all.

What matter to him if the men of the *Lady Fair* went home with only their salt in their hold? What matter if the men of those other Yankee schooners did the same? What matter if their wives and children did ration for a little? That *Capitaine* Taylor was rich. He could look after many wives and children with his money! As for himself, Jacques had a grudge to satisfy, and by the Virgin he swore that it should go unsatisfied no longer!

CHAPTER III

HIS FATHER'S SON

THE red flush was still on Taylor's cheek as he rowed and the red wrath still in his heart. "Pirate" was an ugly word in this late day of policed Atlantic waters and "son of a pirate" was a shameful slur, and what angered Taylor so much was the fact that Beauport knew the slur was undeserved.

Undeserved, yet Beauport had used it out of bitter enmity, an enmity that dated back to Taylor's father's time, his father's romance and his father's so-called act of piracy.

North of Chateau across the Straits of Belle Isle his seething mind flew as he worked the stubby oars mechanically, to storied Chateau on the Labrador coast where thirty years before bloomed Marie Laval, slim offshoot of the exiled Acadians and the flower of the Northern coasts, Marie Laval whose blood was in his veins and who had mothered him for a period all too short.

A wild romance that had been, with Marie luring a score of suitors among whom three were chief, Captain Taylor, Senior, of the Gloucester schooner *Graywing* fishing off Chateau, Jacques Beauport midshipman on the French warship *Groix* protecting the French coast of Newfoundland, and Admiral Pellier, Commander of the *Groix*. Her preference was given to the senior Taylor, but Pellier bribed her Acadian parents with his nationality, wealth and position and led her to the altar in Chateau.

As Pellier had stolen her from Taylor, so Taylor swore to steal her back, and two years later the *Graywing* returned to Chateau with Taylor to keep his oath. That Pellier feared the Gloucester man's activities was at once apparent. On information supplied by Beauport who had watched the Gloucester captain's moves Pellier promptly seized the *Graywing* for an alleged breach of the Newfoundland navigation laws and turned her over to the British to rot in St. John's Harbor and never come before the Admiralty Court.

Taylor's retaliation was also prompt. In place of the *Graywing* he spirited Admiral Pellier's own private schooner *Esperance* out of Chateau Bay by night, alienating her Newfoundland crew, hoisting his own flag at her masthead, piloting her himself with Marie Pellier by his side, leaving the Admiral his rage and a toddling girl babe molded in the Pellier image and called by the name of Madeline.

A wild romance indeed, though not without its sorrow and pity, Taylor like some grim Norseman driving the *Esperance* through a cordon of gunboats down to Gloucester! His act had gone down in the records as an act of piracy. There had come the demand of the British Ambassador for Taylor's arrest, Taylor's defiance and counter demand for the production of the unlawfully seized *Graywing* before the Admiralty Court, the fogging and dropping of the issue, Marie's divorce and remarriage.

Aye, a romance filled with mad passion, thrilling adventure, keen hazard, the boom of cruisers' guns and the thunder of tempestuous seas, and though Captain Taylor, Senior, now slept beneath the deep, though Marie Taylor slumbered under the green of Gloucester's hills, their romance was not yet dead. For the spirits of both mother and father lived in the son, all their red impulse of life, their reckless daring, their urge of the unknown, their eternal questing

Digitized by Google

for the fated romance and the destined measure of adventure.

His was his father's tall, strong frame, the sea-blue eyes, the waves of fair hair; his was his mother's feature-casting, oval, perfectly chiseled, features that in a woman meant alluring beauty, in a man the essence of virile strength. And not alone in Captain Taylor, Junior, did the glamour of that old romance linger but in the enmity of Beauport, an enmity switched from father to son and, if anything, growing more bitter with the years. Of Admiral Pellier himself the young Taylor had lost all track, although he had stumbled on a little grave at Chateau, a grave marked MADELINE PELLIER and knew that the admiral's last tie had snapped. But Beauport, unlike Pellier, had not passed into oblivion. If the admiral had forgotten, Beauport had not forgotten. If the admiral was on the farther bulge of the earth, Beauport was ever present here.

Constantly Taylor and Beauport came in contact and conflict, on the Labrador, on the Grand Banks, on other Newfoundland and Magdalen Island's waters, in Summer and Winter, in schooner and sealer, for Beauport was a wizard of the seasons, minting money by fishing and means more devious throughout three of those seasons and in Spring captaining his steamer *Blavet* upon the floes.

Treaties had been made and abrogated so many times concerning Newfoundland's shores, rights had been extended and withdrawn so often, that the rights of all nations were not in many cases precisely defined or were not interpreted with the same interpretation. Since ancient time a friendly wave war had smoldered among them, and wherever Taylor appeared, Beauport had made the competition bitter with personal hate.

Beauport took the trouble to feed fuel to Taylor's wrath and he fanned the blaze with all the antagonism in his deep sullen nature. It had gone on for long, and now it had come to the point where Beauport had flashed a knife on him, and Taylor knew that a reckoning between him and the Breton could not be far away.

Irish Kerrigan, Boston Jim, Patterson, Brown, Tom Halifax and Scotty McCaig were standing by the tackles. They could not see from their distance what had occurred at Beauport's stages, but they had their own shrewd opinion of the Breton's disposition and his particular animosity toward Taylor and the *Lady Fair*. Moreover the sight of the captain's anger-flushed face was as an open book to them.

"Aye, 'tis his father's blud that iss rioting in him!" exclaimed Scotty McCaig. "Are ye kenning yon danger-signal, men?"

"The divil's gleamin' in his eye," nodded Irish Kerrigan. "I wud not want to be takin' the thud av his fist this blessed minnit."

"We're in for action, boys," howled Tom Halifax, gleeful that his hopes promised fulfilment. "We're in for action at last. I know by the way the cap'n pulls them oars."

In anticipation he hooked on to the topmost dory of the windward nest and he and Brown poised it in the air in readiness.

"What's the word, Cap'n? Ain't that confounded Jacques Beauport goin' to let us git away? Divvil a minnit longer wud I wait for the loikes av him!" dinned a medley of voices in Taylor's ears.

Taylor looked up into their brown, excited faces. He was far off in that moment, far off at Chateau, and it took a little time to come back across the miles. He stared at them silently and at old Hughie Hay in charge of the wheel, then jumped briskly on the deck of the *Lady Fair*.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEINING

"THE big seine, Hughie!" he ordered the mate. With exclamations of satisfaction several of the crew slid it over the side, eight hundred yards of hand-made, Scotch twine, freshly tarred net that sunk the dory to the gunwale.

"Now, over with your dories and set it quick. The school's in the harbor now, but it's shifty and might move out any minute. Hughie, stay aboard with one other man. Where's Ebony? Ho—Ebony!"

At the cry a woolly-headed negro youth of twenty popped out of the galley.

"Yessah, Capting Taylah, heah I'se be!"

"You're the other man, Ebony. Stand by to help Hughie if you're wanted. Hughie, walk the old wagon up on us and don't ever take your hands off the wheel. You can't tell what will break."

There came the clank of the tackles as the

Digitized by Google

dories nested to windward and leeward, six in all, were heaved overside, the splud-splud-splud of their flat bottoms striking the water, the rattle of the removable thwarts being seated, the thump of boots and oars, and the boats, each carrying a man, pulled after Taylor.

Right across the channel they stretched the long seine as Taylor paid it out and began swiftly to moor the ends fast under his exhortations.

"Bear a hand there; shuffle yourselves!" he urged as the sportive school foamed the inner reach of the water. "They'll strike and go over the head line before you—look out, here they come!"

From the inner reach of the harbor the water surged and boiled. Then with darting impact the mass of herring struck the barrier.

The seine writhed and strained, but the twine was stout, the wooden floaters on the head-line extra large, the leaden sinkers on the foot line extra heavy, and moreover Taylor's dory men had a firm mooring on the ends. The big net held, massing the herring thicker and thicker till the whole school came to comparative rest.

"Together now, all hands," sang out Taylor, "haul away——"

In mid-sentence he went down on the bottom boards at the crash of a dory stern into his own, and as he crawled to his knees, Beauport, Codroy John and a score more slid by in boats.

Anathematizing them for their ruse, he groped for an oar. He had cast an eye landward when rowing into the harbor to set the net and seen Beauport smoking and the others lounging in the same spot. Only when the *Lady Fair's* crew got into action with the seine had the Breton moved. For so rapidly had Taylor and his men worked, so smartly the school had struck that they had no time to keep further watch upon the shore. Their eyes dared not leave the herring, and the Newfoundlander's boats had slipped out from the landing stages unnoticed.

Like a flash they had come, and like a flash they drove in on the straining seine, plowing through the startled herring school, ripping at the head line with their fishermen's knives, fending off the *Lady Fair's* dories with the oars. It was a wild scrambling with dory crashing into dory, the blue water shot with silver, fizzing all about, the herring spouting in molten jets through the torn places of the seine and the whole expanse of the harbor reverberating in the calm Sunday morning with the grinding of the gunwales, the whack of the oars, the yelling, splashing, stamping.

"The Lard should strike ye dead!" Codroy John was roaring fanatically. "The Lard should strike ye dead, breakin' His law and the law o' man as ye be!"

He laid about him with a muckle in his left hand, the while he stabbed the seine with the blade in his right, and in the dory next to him Beauport, picturesque in his fluttering casque, danced on the boat bottom till his sabots clattered and flourished the long knife he had drawn on Taylor.

"*Les diables Américains!*" he shrilled. "*Terre Neuviens pour le bon Dieu!* Cut, *mes amis*, cut!"

"You hide-bound hypocrite!" snarled Taylor whirling his dory alongside with a vicious pull on one oar.

Beauport wheeled as Taylor straddled the touching gunwales, his bright steel blade poised in the air. Snarling something unintelligible, he sprang and struck downward in mid-spring, darting his knife for the incapacitating neck thrust.

Taylor watching the lightning flash of the steel, barely dropped his shoulders in time. The point of the blade scragged his skin; the haft in Beauport's fist struck him with a bruising thud; but his oar, held horizontally like a wand in his extended hands, crossed the Breton's hurtling body and sent him staggering back.

Then before Beauport could stab again, Taylor slid both hands together on the oar grip and crashed him senseless into his dory bottom.

As he struck, a dory manned by two Newfoundlanders banged into his own in the struggle about the net. His dory spun sharply about, widening the water gap between it and Beauport's, and Taylor, one foot in each and straddling the gap, splashed down into the Mediterranean blue water.

When he came to the surface both craft were gone out of his reach, and the rest of the boats, unable to pay attention to anything but Beauport's dories bent upon the destruction of the costly seine, were ramming and darting over a battle line of nearly half a mile. From their own stove-in dory the two Newfoundlanders who had collided with him and Beauport had leaped aboard

Digitized by Google

the pair of drifting boats and were sculling them back into the fray.

He and Beauport had clashed near one end of the long seine, and while he paddled with his hands and jacked off his loose sea boots with his toes, he measured with a sailor's eye the distance he was away from his jammed, flailing dories. The dories were much farther away from him than the *Lady Fair*. Hughie at the wheel of the schooner had seen his plight and was yelling his genial encouragement.

"Keep a-floatin', Cap'n, keep a-floatin'," he implored with a grin as broad as a hatch. "I'll be on top o' ye in a minnit. Good ye ain't got diver's shoes on there, or ye'd be anchored a good many fa-athoms daown."

While he grinned and chaffed, Hughie was jibing over to meet him, so, reversing the process and treading water while he skinned his oiled sea-jacket off, Taylor struck out for the *Lady Fair*.

While he swam, he watched the turmoil raging about the net. Beauport's Frenchmen and Codroy John's Newfoundlanders outnumbered the crew of the schooner in the dories by two to one, but for all their inferiority of numbers, his men were putting up a terrific battle. Their week of inactivity had frayed them till they were right on edge for just such a clash as Beauport had precipitated, and it was their opportunity to give vent to their resentment over the tactics the Breton habitually pursued against them.

Irish Kerrigan was in his glory, whirling round and round in his floating craft, swinging right and left upon the luckless dories that happened to come within reach of his ponderous oar. Two Newfoundlanders he knocked sheer over their gunwales in a hand-to-hand fight, and two more boats he stove with pile-like drives of the handle of the oar, so that they floundered in the bay.

Tom Halifax and Brown were locked with four Frenchmen right on top of the seine, overriding the floats and threatening greater destruction to the twine than even the knives had caused.

Patterson, Scotty McCaig and Boston Jim had loosened the farther end of the seine and were desperately endeavoring to haul it aboard, fathom by fathom, the while they rammed and battered every craft in their way. The herring were gone, but it seemed they might save the costly net if Taylor could drive the schooner in on the nearer end and clear Beauport's dories out of the path. So with a mighty effort against the drag of his soaked clothes, Taylor quickened his stroke, straining every sinew to reach the schooner which had now completed her maneuver of coming over on the port tack.

CHAPTER V

IN THE *ESPERANCE'S* WAKE

ASTERN of the *Lady Fair* Taylor could see the *Evening Star*, the *Pride of Haarlem*, the *Light o' Dawn*, the *Mary Bedford* and other schooners lowering their dories in mad haste to rush aid to the *Lady Fair's* fighting crew.

Grant's *Evening Star* was the nearest vessel, and Grant, standing up and yelling belligerently, was leading a flotilla at racing speed for the line of the seine. But as Grant passed abeam of the *Lady Fair* which Taylor had not yet reached, the latter saw the *Evening Star's* captain suddenly cease yelling, rip out a string of emphatic exclamations, whirl his bunched dories and spurt back for the *Evening Star*.

"Walt!" he howled dismally. "Ho—Walt!"

Grant pointed frantically up the mouth of the Humber River, and Taylor turned his face in his long plunging crawl stroke to see the gray shape of a cruiser in the great estuary.

Down from Humbermouth, some distance up the mighty sea arm and the headquarters of both French and English vessels engaged in the Fishery Protection Service, the warship had sighted the disturbance in York Harbor and with funnel smoking was bearing straight down upon the *Lady Fair*.

Taylor had a swift vision of his father's time, of the *Graywing* seized and rotting in the harbor of St. John's, and with a shout of warning to Hughie Hay, he lunged violently through the last half-dozen strokes of his swim.

The pole-masted rig of the *Lady Fair* made it easy for her to come about without loss of time. Both jib and foresail, as well as mainsail rigged on travelers, there was nothing to trim, and as her stern drifted past him, Taylor drew himself up over her low rail that snuggled not over two feet above the water.

Digitized by Google

"Stand ready to crack on the maintopsail, Hughie," he gasped, seizing the wheel the moment his wet, stockinged feet struck the deck. "And you, Ebony, grease that plagued whining main boom's jaws or it'll give us away!"

He whirled the *Lady Fair* over on the other tack, and like a great gull she swooped wide of the *Evening Star*, eating close into the wind.

"Give her a humping hand-along, Walt!" yelled Grant, gleefully pounding his own rail as the *Lady Fair* heeled by. "The fog'll save you if you hit her."

"Take my men aboard, will you, Grant—fish on shares—till I see you again?" Taylor roared as he plunged past and away.

"Sure, Walt!" came back like a faint echo.

It was a matter of three miles to the edge of the fog-bank hanging over Lark Harbor and South Head, and the *Lady Fair* was skimming it as the startled sea-bird skims, filling away on the long tack, Taylor at the wheel, the chill December breeze icing his wet clothes and stiffening his fair hair. Beside stood the aged, stoop-shouldered, bow-kneed Hughie Hay waiting to set the light cloth at a word, while the coal-black cook silenced the offending main boom with a chunk of fatty pork rind.

Astern smoked the gaining cruiser, plowing the blue surface of the bay, driving nineteen knots, overhauling the *Lady Fair*, swift as she was, as if she were lying to. Yet the advantage of the *Lady Fair* lay in the start she had while the Fishery Protection Service vessel was still far up the estuary. Moreover, there was witchery in Taylor's sailing of the schooner, sorcery in the coaxing hands on her wheel, and as the schooner soared into the last mile of the close three-mile race, Taylor felt the grim, triumphant conviction that he was going to win.

Beyond a doubt the commander of the cruiser thought so too, for a signal ran up to her masthead and opened on the wind.

"Yeh!" snickered Hughie Hay. "Lay to, she sez, Cap'n. What on the curve o' the consarned waters does that feller jedge we be? A pore lumberin' scaow?"

"We'll show him what we are in a minute, Hughie," grinned Taylor, and sailed her up a fraction closer into the wind.

A puff of smoke mushroomed out from the cruiser, and a shell flung up a geyser of water two hundred feet in front of the *Lady Fair's* bows.

"Tryin' to sca-are us into a fit," commented Hughie, unmoved.

"Hold hard!" warned Taylor.

Abruptly he squared away before the wind, jibing the fore and main sails over with a crash and dodging a second shell wide abeam. The *Lady Fair* leaped up bodily like a thing alive under the pressure, trampled down again upon the silken surges and dived into the dank oblivion of the fog, clearing the South Head rocks by the scant margin of her own length.

"Crack on, Hughie!" urged Taylor.

Hughie swiftly spread the maintopsail, now that they ran before the wind. On account of the pole-masted rig of the schooner it was handled from the deck, and once it drew, Taylor felt the *Lady Fair* swing to her balance better, felt the impulsive kick of the wheel ease somewhat.

"That's grand," he chuckled softly, turning the wheel over to Hughie Hay and noiselessly thumping his chilled feet on the deck. "Stand in at close as you can. She daren't follow us along inshore, but she's sure to scout around outside. And pray for the fog to last, Hughie. If it breaks, the *Lady Fair* is confiscated as sure as our leach is wet. What cruiser did you make her out to be?"

"The French *Titan*, I reckon—that is, ef I weren't plumb mistook."

"Then they'll scour the whole Newfoundland waters and the Banks to boot till they find the *Lady Fair*. It isn't a few minutes' chase or a day's chase. It's a hunt to the finish, Hughie. They've been interpreting the fishing law pretty strictly of late, and they'll certainly try to make an example of this. We'll have to head her for the Gut of Canso."

"To home, Cap'n? Daown to Gloucester eh?" asked the mate, putting his weight on the wheel to the lift and send of the flying schooner over the momentarily increasing swell.

Taylor shook his head with a movement that was scarcely discernible in the woolly pall through which they rocked. The clammy fog, death cold as it was, somehow possessed the magic of melting the ice upon his hair, and the water trickled down his face to mat upon the breast of his flannel shirt.

"No, not Gloucester, Hughie! My father

Digitized by Google

tried that once, and it led to a heap of trouble. I don't know. Some nice, quiet Nova Scotian bay, I guess."

"There ain't much noise er tongue waggin' to Country Harbor," suggested Hughie.

"Yes, or maybe Musquodoboit! We'll see when we hit the Strait. It'll have to be shoal water and a place where the big steamers seldom call. We'll lay the *Lady Fair* up there, and when she noses out again, not even the *Titan* will know her. We'll rig her up with the old schooner rig. Oh, we'll fix her over all right, if we don't smash up against something solid and *if* the fog holds. Keep her before the wind, Hughie, and drive her like the vikings, I'm off below to get on some dry clothes!"

He threw on fresh clothes and pulled new oilskins from the locker. As he made shift to get them on, the black pate of Ebony was thrust in the doorway.

"Kettle's boilin', Capting!" he grinned, "I'se make you a good hot drink to kill dat chill!"

"All right, Ebony, I'm with you! For the bay was as cold as the heart of a berg!"

CHAPTER VI

THE MESSAGE FROM THE MAGDALENS

ALL day the *Lady Fair* sped blindly through the fog before a wind that was rising every moment. Taylor, again at the wheel, scorned to shorten sail. He drove her wing-and-wing her foresail to starboard, mainsail to port, as his father before him had driven the *Esperance* down these same wild waters, her deck boiling under the hatches, her low rail smashing on the seas behind.

Continually the seas boarded her, great green mountains of water overcurling with a crash, foaming her from end to end, Taylor in his new set of oilskins was lashed to the wheel. Hughie Hay huddled in the freezing perch as lookout, peering for the fog to break. Ebony worked in the closed galley. So there was no unwary man about to be caught by the treacherous surges and carried overside, but the incessant sluicing scaled all the deck with dangerous ice.

It was growing colder all the while, and toward evening hail began to volley through the fog. Shortly afterward the *Lady Fair* struck a howling snow-squall and emerged from it into a clear waste gray of storm-lashed Winter waters with no loom of land in sight.

"The Magdalen Islands must be somewhere to starboard, Hughie, according to my reckoning!" Taylor roared. "Can you pick out the light?"

"No," Hughie screamed through the creaking of the sheets and the roaring of the canvas, "Nothin' showin', Cap'n. Though it's plumb useless my eyes be against yon buckshot snow."

Yet ten minutes later his shout came down to Taylor.

"Bird Rocks Light, ho!"

"Where away, Hughie?"

"On the starb'ord quarter. Must 'a'-bin a squall a-tween."

"Good sea eye, Hughie!" lauded Taylor. "Then we're well clear of anything solid. Came down to eat and get some of Ebony's steaming tea before I raise you St. Paul's Island Light."

Well fortified by a good meal and a bucketful of hot tea, Hughie went aloft once more in the wintry dusk and scanned the darkening seas.

"Sail, ho!" he announced after a time in a discordant bellow. "Dead ahead!"

"What do you make her, Hughie?" demanded Taylor.

"Looks like a leetle catboat."

"Great Scott, you're crazy, Hughie! A catboat out in this sea! Or is it your peppered eyes! Look some better."

"She's not over-la-arge jest the same, and —er— no, raft, by gum! No—no, somehow I can't ca'late—ye-es, I got her. By the razeed schooners o' the Banks, a barr'l, a herrin' barr'l with sail a-top!"

He came tumbling down in the excitement of his discovery and joined Taylor.

"What on the curve o' the consarned waters does it mean, Cap'n?" he yelped.

"Something's wrong with some one, Hughie," Taylor concluded. "They don't float those things hereabouts for fun. But I can't heave to now without setting storm trysail on the main. You and Ebony'll have to fish her as we go. Stand by with a rope. Ho, Ebony, come out here and lend a hand. And both of you watch out for seas!"

Over the *Lady Fair's* buried nose, only a few fathoms away they could see the barrel tossing, the frozen spray rattling on the tin sail that Hughie Hay had mistaken in the distance for the canvas of a tiny catboat. It appeared as if Taylor must run it down and

Digitized by Google

trample it to atoms under the keel of his plunging schooner, but suddenly Hay and Ebony, clutching the iced rail with the rope ready to cast, felt the vessel ease in her flight. The deafening roaring went out of her sails as she began to swing on her heel. Over, over she went till the lee rail was buried, the ocean boiling about their waists, but such was the cunning of the hand on the wheel that they beheld the barrel rising to meet them even as they dipped.

"Cast!" yelled Taylor.

Each clinging with one hand, swinging the rope overhead with the other, they snapped the loop about the sail-rigged barrel, and on the instant Taylor snapped the *Lady Fair* back on her course, whirling her in the quarter of her arc. The schooner righted and leaped ahead like an unleashed hound, while the barrel came sliding inboard, overbalancing Hay and Ebony and riding them across the slippery deck to the weather rail.

"Tain't a herrin' barr'l after all," announced Hughie, kicking off its armor-plate of ice. "It's a m'lasses barr'l."

"Take the wheel a minute, Ebony, till I open," Taylor ordered.

He procured an ax from the galley, carefully pounded in the head and pulled away the boards.

"Lobster tins!" he muttered gravely. "Sealed! Looks like a last message, Hughie."

Then as he pried the tins open with his knife and drew out letters contained therein, his tone changed.

"By Jove, no, they're from the Magdalen Islands," he cried in surprise. "The cable's broken. They've no communication with the mainland, and they've set this adrift to let the mainland know what's up and what supplies to send on the supply boat when she makes her first run."

"It ain't some fool's trick, be it?" demanded the cautious mate.

"No, it's no fool's hoax," declared Taylor. "For that message is signed: 'Mademoiselle Madeline Boucher for M. le Boucher'."

"Well, who's Boucher?"

"Head of the Telegraph Service on Amherst Island. I've heard his name often. Yes, Hughie, and I've heard of Mademoiselle Madeline, too, though I've never seen her."

"An' what abaout her?" frowned Hughie.

"Most beautiful girl on these coasts, they say," laughed Taylor. "What do you know about that? For here she's floated a little God-sent message to us, Hughie!"

Hughie's frown deepened. He was afraid of women and shunned them with a consistency that always made him the object of Taylor's banter.

"Meanin' haow?" he questioned.

"Meaning how?" echoed Taylor with mischievous eyes as he quickly restored the letters to the tins before the spray could wet them. "It wouldn't be gentlemanly of me, Hughie, not to heed a letter from the prettiest girl on Northern coasts. It's not Musquodoboit for us after all. It's the Magdalen Islands. We'll get in some sail and come about. It's a bad blow, but I think the *Lady Fair* will stand it. She's a tough old schooner, and she'll turn over before her sticks will go."

CHAPTER VII

THE WRECK OF THE *LADY FAIR*

HUGHIE HAY stared at him calculatingly, the while he performed the trick of replacing the letters in their receptacle.

"Haow you choosin' them islands?" he demanded finally.

"Why shouldn't I choose them?" countered Taylor whimsically. "Didn't I tell you I can't ignore this message from the deep?"

"But," drawled Hughie, "getting daown to brass tacks, I dunno as you should resk it, Cap'n. I ain't noways fond o' them dark waters myself, and I vote for Musquodoboit or Country Harbor still."

"But the Magdalens are better," Taylor pointed out. "The steamers run there only in Summer. No quieter place in the world, now that the cable's broken. No better place in the world to lay the *Lady Fair* up till we make her over. This is what the imaginative call a sending, Hughie, and we'd be perfectly formed fools not to take advantage of it."

"They ain't got the wireless service in there yet, have they?" ventured Hughie, still frowning at the thought of Madeline Boucher.

"No, though they're talking of installing it soon," Taylor told him.

"An' the m'lasses barr'l?"

"We'll certainly let it drift as it was doing. With these currents and winds it

Digitized by Google

can't miss the mainland. It'll be picked up somewhere on the coast inside of a week or ten days. If it should miss by any chance and if there should be any danger of want on the islands, why we'll be there with the *Lady Fair* to carry out a message ourselves before the Winter ice packs in. That's logic, isn't it?"

"I dunno," returned Hughie, disclaiming all responsibility with a shrug of his stooped shoulders. "Mebbe it be, an' then ag'in mebbe it be a young man's consarned foolishness."

"So," smiled Taylor, the mischievous light in his eyes deepening, "you'd better take the tins below, Hughie and seal them up again. Then you and Ebony may head them in the barrel once more and drop the barrel overside. Only see that the tin sail's fastened on tightly so that it will get the full steering force of the breeze."

Within five minutes the mate and the cook released the flotsam they had salvaged, the wind catching the sail and spinning the barrel slowly abeam.

"Now, Ebony, take the wheel again," Taylor ordered, "while Hughie and I get in some of this sail."

With vicious fisting of the wet, icy canvas and sheets they furled the maintopsail, put a reef in the foresail, a double reef in the main, and the *Lady Fair* breathed herself and came about. Then with the jibing of the fore and main and the backing over of the jib she slanted off on the tack for the Magdalen Islands.

The wind instead of falling was increasing with the dusk. The *Lady Fair's* lee rail was hidden in a swirl of foam. Her dim masts created the illusion of lying on the roll of the surges. The slant of her deck stood steep as a stairway. But it was not a long run, and Taylor knew to an ounce what his vessel would bear. He had no doubt that the full gale that was blowing would soon be a howling hurricane compelling him to lie to under foresail and jib or jib alone if he did not promptly reach shelter.

For it was the wildest season of the year in a waste of waters noted for their wildness, and nowhere did the savage sweep of the Gulf rollers rage so demoniacally as round the approaches to the Magdalen group, approaches surrounded by unmarked reefs, deceptive currents, tide-ripped channels, lurking quicksands and treacherous, shifting shoals.

Soon they caught the loom of the cliffs and the line of the shoals, black as ink under the starlight and frothed with foam, moaning sand-bars miles in length, eery sounding-boards of the sea.

Then against the pale green night sky loomed the rounded dome of a hill.

"There's La Grande Demoiselle Hill, Hughie," Taylor nodded as he steered, "and there's La Petite Demoiselle. Yonder are the beach lights too. But, by Heavens, there's something else, and big. Look—off Entry Island!"

Hay and Ebony turned to stare, and the sight for the moment froze them in their tracks. Off Entry an immense wall of water was rearing up and bearing down upon them, a wall that was patently a combination of current, surge and tide and yet not this so much as the chaos of opposing seas. An erratic shift of the wind had thrown a big roller into the face of the roller raised in its previous course, and, one pyramiding upon the other as they came, the mountain of water reared thirty feet in the air above the schooner.

For the *Lady Fair* there was no avoiding it. Taylor dared not swerve the vessel a point in her course, for hard ahead opened the channel between Entry and Amherst Islands, deep at high tide but holding only about three fathoms at low and not of so great a width that one could gamble with death on reef or bar. With sails straining like the pinions of a sea-bird that the next moment must be dashed against a cliff, the schooner darted for the entrance, the three on deck gripping against the coming shock and staring up into the bore of water shining dull jade under the stars.

Like a tidal wave it caught her in the entrance. Taylor saw the overcurl break in a frothy snarl. Then the mass thundered and crashed on deck.

With a breath-quenching, pulverizing impact he went down upon the planks, one hand clinging to the spokes of the wheel, his body pounded and thrashed over its every square inch, whirling about his one clenched hand as a leaf is whirled on its stem, his arm nearly wrenched from its socket.

Every moment, too, his lungs half full of water and bursting for breath, he felt the *Lady Fair* sink, sink till with a jarring thud she struck the channel bottom, bared by the pouring waterfall like a shallow pool

Digitized by Google

bared by the stream from an emptying pail. Broadside on in the trough, swept by both wind and sea, the schooner staggered and rolled and, her hatches still holding, creepingly began to rise.

Instantly with her uplift the jib split like a gunshot in Taylor's water-deafened ears. Fore and main sails disintegrated with twin thunderclaps. The splintered masts sagged after them, both gaffs smashed down upon the deck, while both booms peaked up weirdly as the *Lady Fair* keeled over with the slow bellying of a dying whale.

As she keeled, Taylor, still clinging to the broken wheel, emerged from the lather, catching the blessed air with a sobbing sound, shaking the brine from his eyes as a dog shakes his bedraggled head.

In the dim starlight he saw that he had the careening deck to himself. Hughie Hay and Ebony both were gone!

Also he glimpsed the crescent shore of Amherst not fifty yards away, the flicker of lights and dark figures running, before the *Lady Fair* flipped bottom-up, swept in a long curve to the crest of a roller and was spewed in the air to crash bodily on the beach.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN THE EBB TIDE FLOWS

THE stupendous seas had broken her back on the channel bottom, and though her sturdy hatches had stubbornly refused to be battered in, now the terrific thud upon the sands crumpled her to pieces. Like a deal box the schooner collapsed, and her timbers commenced to spin offshore again on the outrun of the hammering waves.

Taylor, nearly smothered with the fresh submerging, shaken almost unconscious by the fall upon the beach, dimly sensed himself entangled in the wreckage of the mainmast and main boom and felt the wreckage sliding seaward. He willed to roll clear, but his numbed nerves could not communicate the impulse to his muscles, and it seemed to him that he must float out and eternally be cradled upon the Atlantic's breast as his father before him had been cradled; as stoop-shouldered, bow-kneed Hughie Hay and coal-black, woolly-headed Ebony were cradled even now.

It seemed an easy death, to float by night into nothingness. He ceased willing his obstinate limbs to move and relaxed, his faculties lapsing for a moment to stir again at the stinging pain of spurting sand in his ear. The spurt of sand flew from a running foot that he could hear quite close to his head, and the next instant, just as the waters sucked at his legs, he felt a slim pair of arms slip about his shoulders, soft, warm, girlish arms that dragged his heavy weight partially back from the ebb.

"Quick, father!" came a girlish voice that somehow in its warmth and softness seemed to match those soft, warm arms. "Help me! He is the only one, it seems, and he is too heavy for me with the slippery oilskins and boots on."

Taylor heard sturdier feet in the sand, felt vicious spurts all over his face. Two big rough arms were clasped round him under those of the girl, and he knew he was being carried up the beach toward the flicker of lights.

He revived somewhat under the handling, and in a detached way he noted other figures about the sands. Some crowded along round his rescuers, all talking at once in both English and French, while others were scattered down the shore line peering after the last of the drifting wreckage and crying to each other in shrill tones above the shriek of the wind.

It appeared to be some sort of evening gathering, no doubt an after-church gathering, for the people for the most part were young and neatly dressed, and through the open doorway of the house, where several older heads looked out, came the sonorous baritone of a phonograph that some one had forgotten to turn off, singing:

I shall come home when the ebb-tide flows;
Go where I may, there is One who knows;
Fierce though the gale,
I shall prevail;
I shall come home when the ebb-tide flows.

The older heads withdrew to make way, and Taylor, blinking his wet eyes under the lamp-glare, found himself being carried across the large kitchen of the house. He realized now that the evening gathering was a Sabbath evening recital in which the blaring phonograph played a loud part. The floor was cleared of rugs and covered with benches and chairs in rows and also ranged round the walls. High on a table across one end perched the big brass-horned phonograph with the operator's chair beside and

Digitized by Google

the records lying on it as they had been left.

With an odd power of brain-registering he saw those things without seeming to see them, marked the comfortable plainness of the kitchen, the large pictures on the walls, lithographs of the Intercolonial and Prince Edward Island Railways and of various fishing vessels at sea. Then he passed into a darker bedroom off the kitchen where the man who carried him laid him upon the floor, stripped away his wet oilskins and clothes, rubbed him vigorously as he lay and thrust him into the blankets on the bed.

Apparently it was the cold which had been spurring his senses to wakefulness, for with the cozy contact of the blankets his consciousness momentarily lapsed and he drowsed deeply, rather than swooned, in his warm coverings. When he opened his eyes again, he missed the sound of the phonograph, but a dim light burned on a chest of drawers beside the bedroom doorway, and within the circle of light the man stood waiting, gesturing and hastening with urgings in French the preparation of a steaming decoction upon the stove outside in the kitchen.

Of medium height and build, Taylor appraised him, but strong notwithstanding, for he had carried Taylor's two hundred inert pounds easily into the house. He was dressed in plain, neat, black broadcloth in the shoulders of which lurked the squareness of military bearing. From his brown-bearded face his brown eyes gazed out under heavy brows, sharp eyes, clear, scrutinizing, with a far-away focus that suggested habitual staring into mighty distance.

A striking man, educated, something other than the island fisherman, Taylor judged, and the sudden appearance of his daughter in the doorway as he stepped aside, confirmed the judgment. Those slim, soft, warm arms which had slipped round him on the beach were outstretched before her, gleaming white as she came holding a pewter tray with cup and saucer and a pot of steaming coffee that smote Taylor's nostrils with a delightful fragrance.

The body that glided behind the tray was such as he had dreamed might have belonged to the owner of the arms—lithe, slender, with a grace and softness in movement that reminded him of the ripple of Summer seas. Clothed in a tan dress of some filmy material with a laced bodice that betrayed the swell of her breasts and the milky neck above, dress and figure rippled as one while she crossed to the side of his bed.

The steaming tray had all but hidden her face as she moved, but now as she set the tray upon a chair, Taylor caught sight of her features and drew a long breath of amazement. He had heard many tales of her beauty along the gossiping coasts, but he had never imagined such allurement as this. She was fair yet with a fairness that shone as a foil against his own blondness, her hair dun color like the seaweed and with every glint and undulation of the seaweed twining in the sunny surges, waving low over ears and the nape of her neck to a loosely pinned knot of gold.

In no detail could he dissociate from her that inherent suggestion of the Summer sea. Her eyes were of the sea, Mediterranean blue as the Bay of Islands he had left that morning, and from the corners of her carmine lips the full curves of her cheeks were like the creamy rose that the sea-fog paints in the sunset.

"Ah, monsieur," she smiled, meeting his open eyes, "you are feeling stronger already? But drink this quickly while it is hot. There is nothing like coffee for exposure. No—no, don't talk a word till you drink!"

CHAPTER IX

THE SONG OF THE MAGDALENS

TAYLOR took the cup from the tapering hand, stainless as foam, and emptied it not once but three times of the hot, stimulating liquid.

"*Merci, mademoiselle,*" he breathed heavily, "*et merci aussi pour ma viel*" (and thanks also for my life.)

"You speak French?" she cried surprised and pleased.

"Yes, my mother was French," he informed her. "My name is Taylor, Walter Taylor, captain of the lost Gloucester schooner *Lady Fair.*"

"Ah, Captain Taylor, I am sorry for you, for your vessel and for your crew. And I, my name is Madeline Boucher. This is my father, M. le Boucher of the Island Telegraph Service."

She took her father by the arm as he appeared in the doorway and came to the side of the bed.

"Captain Walter Taylor, father! His

Digitized by Google

boat was the Gloucester fishing schooner *Lady Fair*."

Monsieur le Boucher seemed to be gazing at him across a great distance with those sharp, clear, scrutinizing, far-focused brown eyes. It was a full minute before he spoke.

"Ha!" he sighed at last, slowly putting out his hand, "it is a bad misfortune, Captain Taylor. What waters were you fishing?"

"The west coast of Newfoundland," Taylor informed him.

"Ah, a bitter shore, the French shore! Had you a full crew on the *Lady Fair?*"

"Only two aboard besides myself, thank Heaven!"

"What, Captain Taylor?" cried Madeline, commiseration, apprehension springing into her eyes. "The rest were in the dories?"

"Yes, they were in the dories, but they're safe enough," Taylor hastened to assure her. "You see they boarded the *Evening Star* belonging to Grant, another Gloucester man."

"Then that was good," she rejoiced earnestly. "It is not as bad as I feared. Though the loss of a fine schooner and two men is bad enough! The storm is terrible. Hear how the wind roars overhead!"

"It wasn't the strength of the wind that wrecked me," he pointed out. "I knew how hard it was blowing and made all allowances, but it was a shift that caught me in an impossible place before I could get into the shelter of the harbor. It pyramided two opposing seas, you understand, and they swept the *Lady Fair* like a tidal wave. Would you believe it? Her keel was on the bare channel bottom."

Monsieur Boucher nodded solemnly.

"I believe you," he concurred. "I myself have seen more than one channel bared by the wind alone about the shores of our islands. It was a miracle you escaped. Do you feel at all chilled now? Have some more coffee?"

"No, thanks, not just now," declined Taylor. "It was splendid coffee, and I drank three cups. It has chased the chill, and my veins are like fire under the hot stimulant and your gentle rubbing."

"So?" demanded Boucher, his heavy eyebrows elevating whimsically. "You felt the touch of my soft hands?"

"Yes," grinned Taylor, "and they gripped like a Turkish towel."

"*Voilà*, then," laughed Boucher, "keep the blankets to your chin. You will be all right by morning, though there is no knowing when you can send word to Gloucester or get away from the Islands. You see the cable has broken in the heavy seas, and there is no communication with the mainland. We have floated a message offshore, but only *le bon Dieu* knows when it will be picked up or when the Winter storms will subside to let the Pictou steamer cross or make possible the repairing of the cable."

"Ah—hah!" nodded Taylor non-committally.

"Thus," Boucher went on, "you are our guest for an indefinite period. There is not a great deal of excitement in the Islands during the Winter, but we try to keep up as much social intercourse and entertainment as possible. Yonder is a sample of the way we lighten a dreary time."

He waved a hand toward the kitchen where the young people who had searched the beach were seating themselves again in rows upon the benches and chairs.

"They are waiting for your song, Madeline," he reminded his daughter, gently touching her arm. "Tell them Captain Taylor is quite well and then go on and sing to them as you promised. Yes, take the tray with you out of the way. I shall sit on the chair beside Captain Taylor and talk to him."

When Madeline was gone, Boucher dropped into the seat beside the bed and drew a short pipe from his pocket.

"Your own pipe is here, Captain. It fell out of your clothes. And here is my tobacco to fill if you wish."

"Thanks," accepted Taylor, "I think I shall."

He lit up and lay on his side, puffing with avidity. Boucher's pipe also was wreathing his head in smoke, and now that he smoked he appeared to have forgotten his intention to talk. His far-focused eyes gazed idly out through the doorway into the kitchen where Taylor's own eyes were fixed.

There the waiting people were all expectantly watching Madeline as she came out, some of the men in black or blue clothes, some in homespun, the women in dresses that ranged from modern to ancient. The prettiest garment he saw was Madeline's filmy creation. There were others descending a long scale to fashions which even his mannish eyes recognized as outlandish in

Digitized by Google

this day of ever-changing modes. And there were still others, maidens' costumes of an old, old period, kirtles of many colors, red, blue, purple and green with contrasting colored bodices and white Normandy caps upon the wearers' heads. Dressed as their Acadian grandmothers, as their Norman great-grandmothers, they posed picturesque as a painting on the long rows of rough seats under the glare of the lamps.

In an aisle left up the center Taylor could see Madeline making her way to the front where perched the big phonograph. She was pausing every foot or so to answer the whispered questions which he knew concerned his own condition, his identity and the identity of his schooner. To the landsman it might have been a shock to see the gathering go back so quickly to where they had left off but not to Taylor. Too often had he seen the hungry ocean gulp down the comrades by his side to be smitten with any wonderment, and as it was with him, so it was with these Islanders.

Wrecks in the sailing season were daily cast upon their shores, sometimes storm-blown barks from the outer seas and sometimes the boats of their own Island fishers and men were gone in a moment from their midst. It was not that they failed to care or that their hearts were not warm, but that they had seen the Atlantic take its toll so often. If they halted their lives for mourning every time mourning was in the air, they would have no time left for living.

So they resumed their recital under Taylor's eyes that followed the figure of Madeline gliding to the front while he pondered on the strange message from her hands that had brought him to her. She picked up a guitar from its case under the table that held the phonograph, nestled it like a loved thing against her supple body and softly struck some opening chords. All her movements, like her walk, held the liquid run and sway of tiny wavelets, and Taylor's admiration gleamed in his eyes behind the drifting screen of smoke. As she opened her lips and lifted a rich contralto voice to her own accompaniment in the "Song of the Magdalens," his admiration deepened, for it was a trained voice, wonderfully true and powerful that swelled in the words:

Seething the billows, fleecy the foam,
  Deep and strong is the swell;
Over the wild of our ocean home
  Rings the warning wave-washed bell;
Roaring the wind and the thunders loud;
  Ragged the lightning that splits from the cloud,
But we rest secure for we trust His will
  Till we hear His whisper "Peace, be still"—
Till we hear His whisper "Peace, be still."

"By Jove, where did she get that training, learn to sing like that?" whispered the astonished Taylor in the pause before the refrain.

"In Quebec," Boucher whispered back. "She has spent a good deal of time there with the schools and the music. Hush!"

Lo, the loud sea is our cradle,
  Swung by the tempest's blast;
O'er us His wings in shelter He flings
  Till the raging storm be past.
And we rest asleep in the heart of the deep
  While the Lord is here beside,
  While the Lord is here beside.

Through her voice the harmonious power of wind and sea seemed to breathe into Taylor's ears. He felt the smite of the storm and smelled the tang of the salt spray, but abruptly in the second verse the timbre of her tone changed to slumberous, golden mellowness.

Peaceful the waves and the stars do shine
  Over the laughing sea;
Playful the spray and so sweet the brine
  As it blows its kiss to me.
Hushed is the storm and the thunders cease;
  The sea is at rest and my soul at peace;
And the night wind's breath is a soft caress
  Like the hand of God put forth to bless,
Like the hand of God put forth to bless.

Lo, the low sea is our cradle,
  Rocked by our Father's hand;
O'er us His wings in shelter He flings
  While His angels round us stand.
And we rest asleep in the heart of the deep
  For the Lord is here beside,
  For the Lord is here beside.

Truly it was the "Song of the Magdalens," Taylor thought as Madeline ceased and glided into a seat while the gathering hummed with appreciation, the song of the imprisoned in the heart of the St. Lawrence Gulf, the epitome of the Islanders' lives, and truly she herself was the Goddess of the Gulf. His admiration gleamed more brightly in his eye, and Boucher must have caught it even behind the screen of smoke, for he leaned over and tapped the Gloucester man upon the shoulder.

"A word of caution in season, Captain Taylor," he spoke softly in the seclusion of the room. "It is not that I think you young

Digitized by Google

enough to fall in love at first sight, second sight, or, for that matter, the hundredth sight, but the thing has happened before. Several Americans have come here, some artists, some litterateurs, some pleasure rovers, and all of them made me much trouble with their fancies before they could be persuaded to go away. I mention it so that the wind which blew them here may not blow you along the same air lane. *Comprenez-vous?* Madeline will marry one of her own race. There is no engagement with any one, you understand. I am a man who does not believe in engagements, but it is tacitly understood."

"Then the man of your own race is a lucky man," observed Taylor, his eyebrows drawing together in a frown and his lips gripping his pipe-stem firmly as he searched the gathering for one whom he might conceive to be her favored.

"He is not here tonight," continued Boucher evenly, shrewdly interpreting Taylor's glance. "In fact he is not on the Magdalens at present. It is only in Summer that he is here, and sometimes in the Spring. And now that I think of it, that is another chance that we may be able to establish communication with the outside world. I did not think to mention it till this moment. That is the Spring sealing. The man I speak of owns a steamer and will be sailing from St. John's for the Gulf in March. Nothing is certain, you remember, but there is a chance. He has interests here as I said, and if the hunt for the seal herds brings him anywhere near the shores of the Magdalens, I have no doubt but he may call."

"And his name?" questioned Taylor swiftly, his teeth biting hard on the amber.

"Jacques Beauport. His steamer is the *Blavet*."

CHAPTER X

TRAPPED

EVEN as Boucher uttered the words, Taylor's eyes caught a movement of the closed kitchen door. Without the ceremony of a knock it swung open, suddenly framing two figures in the doorway, and Taylor stared in sheer amazement at Jacques Beauport and Lieutenant Grande of the French cruiser *Titan*.

Madeline Boucher gave a little startled cry, echoed by members of the gathering. She stood up in their midst, while Boucher himself got up swiftly from his seat beside Taylor's bed and launched himself through the bedroom doorway.

"Talk of *le diable!*" he greeted with nervous excitement. "Jacques, I had just spoken your name. Tell me how you and Lieutenant Grande come this way like ghosts out of the dark."

"Why, easily, my dear Boucher," grinned Beauport, unbuttoning his heavy outer coat so that the lamplight fell upon his Breton casque and the sea boots which had replaced his sabots. "We came in a charette (two-wheeled cart) from Grindstone. *Tiens*, I suppose the wind prevented you hearing the wheels!"

"Then the *Titan* is at Grindstone?" asked Madeline, making her way through the staring people to her father's side to add what Taylor thought a none too effusive greeting.

"No, Madeline, not the *Titan* but the *Blavet*," bowed Beauport, his glance lingering on her boldly and sweeping on to Taylor lying smoking within the bedroom. "How, you ask? It all has to do with Captain Taylor yonder. The *Titan* ran aground on a rock outside the Bay of Islands while she chased the schooner *Lady Fair* for breaking the Newfoundland fishing law in seining herring on Sunday. It will take tugs from St. John's to pull her off, so Lieutenant Grande requisitioned my steamer to continue the chase."

"So far, so good, Beauport!" Taylor challenged loudly. "But kindly explain how in the world you knew I was here."

"*Comment?* Can you ask?" laughed Beauport maliciously. "The *Blavet* is a fast steamer. We judged you would head for the Strait of Canso, and all the time I think we were not far behind you in the fog. At evening it cleared, and south of the Bird Rocks we thought we sighted your sail, but *voilà*, what do you imagine it was? A tin sail upon a floating barrel!"

"Our message to the mainland!" exclaimed Madeline.

"*Oui*," Beauport nodded, "and when we pulled it in and opened it, we saw that some one had opened it ahead of us. Ho! Ho! Is there any need to say more? What fugitive from the law would miss such a chance of seclusion? And what man in these waters would ignore a message from your own hand, Madeline?"

Again his bold eyes lingered on the girl,

Digitized by Google

though she, her own eyes gazing at Taylor, failed to meet his ardent glance.

"Thus," he continued, "I let the message float on its way. I put about in the *Blavet*. I am here and—well, Lieutenant Grande does the rest."

"Yes, I am sorry, Captain Taylor, but I ask Magistrate Boucher for your arrest, you understand," announced Lieutenant Grande stepping forward briskly in his naval uniform and fixing brilliant, gray, protruding eyes upon Taylor under the stiff peak of his cap. "There's no use asking about the *Lady Fair*, I take it, seeing you where I do?"

"No use," answered Taylor. "If you want to seize her, you'll have to dive to the bottom and comb a good many miles of stormy sea."

"Very well, but you're still here, Captain, and tomorrow I'll take you back to St. John's if you don't mind," Grande informed him with a droll smile.

"Oh, don't get it into your head that I mind that!" laughed Taylor enigmatically. "Even if it's an ill turn you've done me, you've done these Islanders a good turn in coming. Isn't that so, Miss Madeline?"

"Yes," she smiled, "the *Blavet* is now the link between us and the outside world, and I do not think my father will be slow to take advantage of it. Will you, father?"

"My goodness, no, Madeline, I will not be slow!" declared her father. "I have no doubt about our message eventually reaching the mainland, but we must not wait for that now. You and I must sail on the *Blavet* also. At St. John's I can get into touch by cable with Halifax and Pictou. Then I will know what can be done about getting my service into working order. As for you, Captain Taylor," turning to the Gloucester man, "I am sorry about these complications. Permit me to apologize for having misfortune overtake you in my own house."

He nodded courteously and conducted Beauport and Grande on to the glowing stove to take off their outer coats, warm themselves and imbibe some of the steaming coffee which still stood upon the lids.

Before she passed on behind them to fulfil the duties of hostess, Madeline lingered a moment in the doorway of Taylor's room and came to his side.

"I'm sorry, too," she told him, smilingly putting out her hand. "You don't look like a hunted criminal, and you mustn't think we regard you as one. There is always trouble over the fishing regulations, here on the Magdalens as well as on Newfoundland. Won't you tell me just how it happened?"

So in a few terse sentences Taylor recounted the clash in the Bay of Islands and the coming of the *Titan*.

"But we have the right to take herring in the harbors," he concluded. "That's one of the controversial points they're going to thresh out at the Hague shortly, and you'll see we will win."

"That would let you clear, then," she pondered sweetly, "except for a fine for breaking the Sunday law—and breaking it in a good cause, at that. But you should have gone back to your own soil. You would have been safer there, I think. What possessed you to choose the Magdalen Group? The seclusion, as Jacques Beauport suggested?"

"No," answered Taylor, gallantly meeting her eyes, "any mainland port would have suited me better for that part. It wasn't the seclusion. It was your message, your written name, and what I had heard of you."

"Ah!" she breathed in delicious confusion, "Captain Taylor had heard of me before?"

"Yes, as the Goddess of the Gulf," he confessed recklessly. "It was what I had heard of you that brought me, and—please let me say I'm glad of my choice of refuges, even if it hasn't been entirely unsuspected. You see, romance isn't dead in this world yet, and what man with a particle of romance in his heart would have refused to respond to that tide-borne message of yours?"

A sudden flame leaped to her cheeks. Sweet Heaven, no, romance that her awakening woman's heart ever quested was not dead in the world! Here it was a living, colorful thing, come across stormy seas to her, and here was a man to stir the heart of romance in any woman and send the red to her cheeks!

"Are you glad, too?" Taylor whispered, unconsciously pressing the hand he still retained.

"I—Ah!—sweet Heaven, how should I know so soon, Captain Taylor?" she evaded tantalizingly. "If I am to be glad, I must be made glad. *Voilà*, there is a woman's tangling tongue for you! But this much I will tell you: I am glad you are not down yonder in the cold green waters among the sunken ribs of the *Lady Fair!*"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI

THE HAZARD OF THE FLOES

THE charette was the only form of Island transport, so shortly after noon of the next day, seated in the quaint two-wheeled, wooden carts, guiltless of any springs, they drove over the pounded sands and oozing quicksands to Grindstone Island.

With wonderful celerity the news of the wreck of the *Lady Fair* and the coming of the *Blavet* had flashed throughout the length and breadth of the Magdalens. Upon the Grindstone wharf and the red, rounded hills beside, an immense crowd was assembled to pass a word of welcome with the *Blavet's* crew and cheer her as she sailed.

Out of thirteen main islands in the group, nine of them had precarious sand-bar connections when the tide was out, and from Amherst, Grindstone, Wolf, Grosse, East, and Coffin, people had foregathered here. The hurricane had blown itself out at dawn, and over from Entry and Alright Islands, lying off the Main String, others had come by boat across the channels.

It seemed that the whole population of the Magdalens was present, their one thousand English their six thousand Acadians, every one from L'Anse à la Cabane to Grand Entry. They almost hid the hulk of the *Blavet* lashed to the pier, a modern, massive steel steamer of the ice-breaker type with crow's-nest perches lashed to both fore and main masts and all her pennants flying.

As the charettes rumbled along the wharf to her side, the crowd divided, opening up a lane to stare curiously from two sides upon Taylor and Grande or to nod greetings to Beauport, Boucher and his daughter. They knew Jacques Beauport well, for he purchased the bulk of their harvest of the deep, and Boucher they knew even better. Besides being in charge of the Island Telegraph Service, he was more important than the most important man in Havre Aubert the capital. Well educated persons were scarce in the Magdalens, and when one was found the Islanders heaped offices upon him with cumulative effect. Boucher was their magistrate, postmaster, notary, registrar and a dozen other things.

For him they had a vast respect and a vaster homage for his daughter. That she was the most beautiful woman in the Islands they all concurred. Some whose good fortune it had been to travel beyond the shores of the Magdalens vowed that nowhere had they seen one nearly so fair, neither in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Quebec nor Newfoundland. Also, they vaguely guessed that some day, sooner or later, she would perhaps marry that lucky, wealthy Jacques Beauport, who now led her so proudly upon the deck of his own ship.

"*Très bien*, Codroy John," Beauport ordered his first mate who held the bridge, "cast off and get under way. We must be clear of this pack ice before dark. I will be with you in a moment when I have shown my passengers their cabins."

With pardonable pride Beauport conducted them to the officers' quarters which, the *Blavet* being built to run in the coast passenger service in the closed season for seals, boasted good accommodation. His own cabin he assigned to Madeline, Codroy John's to Boucher and the second mate's to Lieutenant Grande and Taylor whom it was as well to keep together while they slept although there was to be no restriction imposed on Taylor's movements when on deck. Then, leaving them to arrange the cabins to suit themselves, he hurried up to take over the command from Codroy John.

All lines had been cast off, and the sealer was backing and swinging from the wharf her siren blowing, her pennants crackling, her deck and rigging lined with her cheering crew, while from the Grindstone wharf and hills seven thousand throats answered her back shout for shout, till she was well beyond voice range.

Ahead of her as far as the eye could reach lay heavy field ice brought down by the strong Gulf winds from the Strait of Belle Isle. Close-packed it lay, a ghostly stretch, spotted with occasional slack ice, bathed blood-red by the ruddy westering sun and pierced by the castellated towers of emerald bergs. A dangerous field it lurked, if a rising wind should start to raft it, and Beauport at once brought all his weapons into play to force a passage through to open water which his lookout in the crow'snest caught with the glasses many miles away.

With poles, hawsers and dynamite the *Blavet's* crew fought the weighty floes, squeezing, wedging, ramming a way

Digitized by Google

through, but it was a slow work to drop Hospital Cape astern and forge along the North Beach in a line almost parallel with the shores of Wolf and Grosse Islands. The sun had gone down when they rounded North Cape. Through the deepening dark Beauport's passengers watched the outline of East Island slipping by as the *Blavet* with the tip of the Main String on her beam bore off a point or two to pick up the light on the Bird Rocks and lay her course for St. John's.

"Yonder's East Cape," announced Taylor suddenly, pointing out the dim loom of the promontory to Madeline where he stood alone with her on the forward deck. "Now I want you to tell me something. Is there anybody on Byron Island? I know Kellan on the mainland had leases on a Summer fishing station there, but does he leave any one in charge all Winter?"

"No, he doesn't leave any one," Madeline informed him. "Byron is totally deserted in Winter. Why do you ask?"

"Can you keep a secret?" he responded whimsically, though the underlying gravity of his voice warned her that he was speaking in all seriousness.

"Yes, any true woman can," she laughed, "notwithstanding all old adages to the contrary. What is it?"

"I'm going to leave you hereabouts. You didn't think I was going to let myself be paraded into St. John's so quietly, did you? They've no right to take me there, and I'm not going. That's why I wanted to know about Byron. We're just about the nearest to it now we will be, and I'll drop overside when no one is near. If they put about and search the main islands, they won't find me. But I'm not going to say good-by to you, just *à bientôt!*"

"Sweet Heaven," cried Madeline all startled, "you risk your life! Think of the hazard."

"It's not so hazardous," he belittled coolly. "The floes are tightly packed. I'll make it before there's any wind to open them."

"But you'll starve to death on Byron," she protested, "for you'll find nothing whatever to eat."

"There are fish and seals. The seal herds will likely come south very early with this amount of ice about. Don't worry—I won't starve. Besides, I won't be there that long. When I'm sure the *Blavet* is gone, I'll cross over to Grosse. *À bientôt* again, Miss Madeline—or Madeline, if I may! We're past my calculated point now, and every minute is taking me farther away from my objective. It's high time for me to be overside."

"Overside!" echoed a voice behind them. "Overside is it, you are planning? *Comment?* Lieutenant Grande, come here!"

Taylor whirled on his heel to see Beauport darting upon him from the foot of the forward bridge ladder. The distance he was away told Taylor that he could not have overheard the first part of the conversation with reference to Byron Island. Still, the last part, even the last word which Beauport had echoed, was enough to betray Taylor's intention.

Almost without volition he leaped to meet Beauport, and the latter was caught unawares by the unlooked for movement. Jacques had expected a chase about the deck, but he experienced a head-on collision before he had time to draw his breath. Taylor's big frame crashed into his. He went reeling aside, and before he was able to take a grip with his hands, the Gloucester man seized him bodily, hurled him against the bridge ladder and then jumped over the *Blavet's* low rail on to a pan of ice that rubbed her hull amidships.

Running across the big pan, which he guessed to be nearly half a mile in diameter, Taylor could hear pandemonium breaking out upon the *Blavet*. Her momentum had carried her past him and shooting a glance over his shoulder, he made out the dim shape of Codroy John upon the bridge yelling something down the speaking tube, while upon the bridge platform, wildly gesturing with his arms in the light from the wheelhouse windows, Beauport rated the wheelsman for not getting the vessel over faster.

Beauport did not want to lose contact with the pan of ice on which Taylor had leaped and which would give him a clue for the chase, but Taylor was practically certain that the *Blavet* had lost contact. Moreover, it was with grim satisfaction that he came to the edge of the pan and glimpsed a six-foot lead of open water as black as ink in the night and mirroring a spatter of golden stars.

As he leaped it to the next pan, he paused a second to watch it. It was slowly widening, and though he could see the *Blavet*

Digitized by Google

stopped with all her lights blazing and hear the clamor of her crew pouring overside to ferret the floes for him, he chuckled quietly to himself.

They would not cross that lead by the time they got to it, even if they sensed the direction of his flight, and the ice was too thick to make any speed with boats even if they took the risk of launching them where they might be stove. So, confident that he had put a barrier between him and pursuit, he set about crossing other leads, making his way toward Byron Island.

Ghostly, sullen, dangerous, bleak, lone, barren as was that island, lying with a screen of wild sea between itself and its nearest neighbor, it would be like a haven to him out of the vastness of ocean and night.

CHAPTER XII

THE GODDESS OF THE GULF

IT WAS much darker than Taylor had imagined, now that he was away from the glare of the *Blavet*, but though the darkness added to the danger of his slipping into leads between the ice pans, it also had the anomalous power of saving him from discovery by any night-glass on the sealer. He was already nearly a mile from the ship amid much rougher ice jumbled and jammed by the vagaries of the currents, and he could no longer see her lights. Only, he glimpsed two lanterns run up to her crow's-nests as guiding stars for the return of her scattered crew.

Byron Island lay several miles off the Main String, and at the point where he left the ship, Taylor calculated his distance from it at between two and one-half and three miles. Owing to the hummocky ice he could not see the island's shore, but northeast by east he fixed his eyes upon the glimmer of the Bird Rocks Light, a dozen miles away, and steered a course thereby. Like a heavenly beacon it shone, one hundred and twenty-five feet or more above the sea, pointing the frozen path for his feet.

Yesterday he had listened to the Winter voice of the Gulf. To-day he looked upon its Winter face, vast, ruthless, cruel, hungry, the face of fatalism, of mysticism, of eternal void. And deep down under his shuffling feet he could feel the ceaseless throe and heave of the mighty, measured ocean pulse, beating as it had beaten from the beginning of time. To the throb and surge of that pulse, to the lipping of the black water round his boots, to the grind and crack of floes bellying up like saber-toothed sharks on the tide he forged steadily on till he raised the sheer steeps of Byron's black cliffs.

Inshore the ice was packed more tightly, jammed among the broken stages stilted out into the water. It was rougher traveling, but finally after several slips and falls he managed to reach the outermost stage and crawl along its rickety timbers to a huddle of unpainted wooden buildings used as fish sheds. For all his exertion, he was thoroughly chilled by the low temperature of the floes, and he stumbled into the first building at hand, striking a match as he went, hunting for a stove.

There was none in the first building nor in the second, nor the third, but at his fourth attempt he was rewarded by the sight of a rusted sheet-iron stove and a half-burned candle standing upon a shelf littered with net fragments and other fishing gear.

Taylor lost no time. By the light of the candle he scraped together material for kindling a fire, crammed the stove full of broken planks and set it roaring. There was no bedding to be found, but he made the heat of the stove suffice, removing only his boots and oilskins and lying down on the floor within the circle of radiation.

He slept till after midnight, and when he awoke his somnolent eyes held the vision of Madeline Boucher. Half in a dream, half in reality he beheld her standing by the stove with the lighted candle he had used in her hand. Like a whisper in his drowsy ears her voice was calling him, and he accepted it as a sweet phantasy of sleep, this ethereal, intangible apparition fair as the angel that walked the Gulf with warnings for deserving sea captains. Was this a warning for him? Too lethargic to ponder the hazy idea, he was lapsing into oblivion again when a burning hot drop of melted wax stung his cheek.

Abruptly he awakened fully, springing erect with a jump.

"Good Heavens, Madeline, you—the real you!" he exclaimed in utter astonishment. "But it can't be. You? Yes, it is! And the *Blavet*? Where's the steamer? Off shore?"

"The *Blavet* is gone, Walter!"

Digitized by Google

"To St. John's? You ventured on the floes and they missed you?"

"No, no—gone down!" she told him.

"Sunk? Great Jupiter! How?"

"The floes," Madeline explained rapidly. "Jacques shouldn't have lain to. It was dangerous, but you know how reckless he is. He wouldn't give up the search although the ice was freezing the sealer. The heavy floes strained and opened her plates."

"Didn't he lighten her?" asked Taylor astounded.

"Yes, the crew threw everything overboard, but it was no use. The pressure was too great, and she went down, half foundered, half crushed by the masses of ice. The wind was rising, you see, and the ice was beginning to raft. Listen to it blowing now!"

"Another storm making," nodded Taylor, catching the howl of the blast over the shanties. "Thank God, Madeline, that the *Blavet* didn't go down farther off Byron! Where are the others? On the shore?"

"On the floes just off the shore a little distance. They saved the boats in case the ice pack should open before we reach the main islands. They're making them ready to drag across while I ran up to warn you. I'm sorry I couldn't keep a secret after all, but I had to tell them."

She laughed ingenuously, and Taylor echoed her merriment.

"I knew!" he accused banteringly. "I knew it would have to come out some time."

"I couldn't let you starve here," she laughingly defended. "If this ice pack goes out, you mightn't get across for weeks. I doubt if a small boat, such as are stored up here, could manage it before Spring. And if it were too stormy to cross, you certainly couldn't get fish or anything else to eat."

"Yes, you're right," Taylor admitted. "I fancied it was the good angel of sea captains when I woke, and I see my fancy is fact. Besides, there's no need for me to hide now."

"No, no need—and hurry, won't you? There, they're calling from the floes. They're ready with the boats."

"All right, I'll have my boots on in a moment, Madeline. Better warm yourself well before we start."

While he drew on his sea boots and donned his oilskins, Madeline did as directed, thoroughly warming her hands and body before she put on her mittens and pulled her wool ulster close. Then Taylor checked off the stove so that there was no danger of the shanty catching fire and ran down the beach with her toward the black figures huddled round the boats upon the floes.

"*Comment, Capitaine?*" sneered Beauport. "So you are not quit of us yet!"

"No, nor are you at St. John's yet!" countered Taylor swiftly.

"Will you never mind your bickering?" boomed Codroy John audaciously. "Though you both be of higher sea post than me, you show wonderful little sense in starting a quarrel o' men. 'Tis a quarrel o' God's we will have o' a sudden by the way this wind do blow!"

One boat had been stove in the launching amid the floes, leaving seven to carry the whole crew if they had to take to the water. Beauport commanded Number One, Codroy John Number Two, the second mate Number Three, the boatswain Number Four, Lieutenant Grande Number Five, Boucher Number Six, and at Beauport's sullen request and mention of emergency Taylor himself took charge of Number Seven.

When the crafts were lined out, Beauport without further parley led off at the head. A number of the crew had been told off to tow with ropes fastened to the bows of each boat, while others stumbled by the gunwales on either side, easing the boat bottoms down the rough pitches of ice or sliding them up the steep faces of the jammed floes. Madeline walked or ran between boats Number Six and Number Seven, sometimes by her father's side, sometimes by Taylor's or oftentimes jumping into either boat as it was slid across a wide lead.

Steadily they made progress in spite of the ever-rising wind. Indeed its increasing force in the direction they were going served them well, for it packed the pans more tightly the closer they got to the main islands. They encountered no lead so wide that it could not be crossed by bridging with the boats. It seemed as if they were going to make the shore on schedule, but unexpectedly the wind shifted when they were within two miles of Grosse, and the shift loosed the storm that was lurking in the outer waters.

"It's coming!" Taylor roared to his crew,

Digitized by Google

stumbling along by the boat's gunwales, but his voice was lost in the wind as it left his lips.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NORTH BEACH

OVER the shrouded sky a hand seemed to spread before their uplifted faces, a giant hand with a thousand-mile taper of smoking storm in its grip.

The dark pall widened and undulated, uncanny to the sight, trailing like the magnified smoke of a brand held low to the earth.

"Madeline, where are you?" Taylor shouted at a venture.

So wicked was the force of the cold draft on his eyes that he could not see if she was with her father and the crew of Number Six only a boat's length ahead.

But before he could tell if an answer came, the blizzard broke.

All in an instant it struck them, almost within sight of land, and Codroy John's quarrel o' God's was on their hands. Of a truth it burst like the wrath of Heaven in a howl that strained the wide throat of the world. Under their feet they felt the ice pack commence to open, and grim jaws of water gaped here and there, black, yawning, terrifying.

"Boats ho!" yelled the shrill voice of Beauport from the head, carrying down to Taylor in the rear above the smash, boom and thunder of the grinding pans. "All aboard!"

Madeline at that moment had dropped back beside Taylor in charge of boat Number Seven, and the instant Beauport's cry came, Taylor seized her and swung her into the sternsheets.

"Hold hard, Madeline!" he yelled. "We're going to launch."

All about the freezing spray was flying, stiffened foam billowing the air like floating feathers, fragments of crushed ice hailing against the boat. Through the dark wrack of the storm clouds a steel-gray radiance was struggling, the first light of the shrouded dawn, and under it the chaos of lashing wave and tossing floe glimmered into perspective like a million prehistoric monsters in deadly battle. Puny, merest atoms in that colossal conflict, the men staggered and pushed, shoving the boats out at the mercy of the roaring water.

The floe from which Taylor was launching Number Seven tilted as they shoved. The bow met the waves sooner than he had calculated, and he and the members of the crew on either gunwale had just time to fling themselves aboard, before the vicious tide-rips hurried them shoreward. Taylor seized the steering oar with a shout to his pullers to get in place.

"Pull!" he exhorted. "And two of you bail!"

He drew Madeline back against him and, freeing one arm at a time, contrived to shed his oilskin coat.

"Slip it on," he urged. "It will keep the ice from chilling you. You'll be sheathed in it before three minutes."

"But you!" she protested, shivering.

"Never mind, I'm used to it. Quick! Here's a roller."

With a crash the wave sluiced them, giving the bailers a frantic minute or two. It froze as it passed, armoring oars, boat and occupants like the frosting of a magic brush, and with every shipped wave crest the armor thickened till Taylor could actually shatter it from time to time with a slap of his palm on Madeline's oilskin. Ahead of them in the wild dawn they could see the other boats, making inshore to Grosse, pulling and bailing as frantically as Number Seven, flinging skyward on the gray-green, white-fanged wave-tops or dodging past the charging fronts of stupendous floes.

And here was the point of greatest danger, just where the final dash for the land had to be made. They had to ride the incurling rollers and race the straining ice at the same time lest the pans crush them like so much matchwood at the wave line. It could be done only by a terrific spurt at the right moment, and in boat Number One upon which he anxiously fixed his eyes Taylor saw Jacques Beauport standing erect, sway through a wide arc to the tremendous pitching of his craft and watching the conflict of ice and tide upon the hammered beach.

All at once Beauport raised his own steering oar skyward as a signal to those behind.

"Pull, *mes camarades!*" he bellowed, and like a swift echo, every craft answered him: "Pull—Pull—Pull—" all down the line.

Madly they spurted, striving with the wonderful strength of men that rises above the limitations of heart and muscle in emergency and takes on the power of the supernatural. In Number Seven, Taylor shifted

Digitized by Google

his weight this way and that upon the steering oar, marveling at the strength within him that threw the ponderous, ice-laden craft clear of the grinding floes and steadied it on the crest of the surf that slanted shoreward like a long green terrace.

Down they shot, the ice pans climbing behind like monsters raging at the escape of their prey, and Taylor steered no longer but switched his oar in the forward pull.

"Now, all together," he urged. "Backs into it. Pull for your blessed lives!"

All around him others were shouting, cracking oar and sinew in convulsive effort, shooting for the beach at dizzying speed. The boats were bunched, Number Five to port of him, Number Three to starboard, when a big pan of many tons' weight upended on the top of the surf-terrace and fell sheer through the air. It blotted out Lieutenant Grande's boat as a hand smashes a fly, throwing up a bore of water with its impact that whirled all the rest of the boats about like corks. Taylor saw Number Three flip bottom-up as his own craft was flung on the beach along with the others.

The ebb went out, the great pan on its shaggy bosom. Only four out of the seven boats lay half-stove and shattered upon the grim North Beach.

"Sweet Heaven," breathed Madeline, quaveringly. "Whose — whose was the other?"

"Number Five," groaned Taylor, mechanically reaching for a hand-ax in the litter of the broken boat locker. "The boatswain's—but we've got to have a fire."

The steel bit obediently under his hand, splintering the broken bits of board, but his mind was not as yet withdrawn from the raging sea, and he watched in a detached way the attitudes of the others.

Several of the sailors were smashing wood like himself. Boucher was running from the wreck of boat Number Six toward them. Beauport stood in a dazed way, staring out where three of his boat's crews had disappeared in a twinkling.

Codroy John strode uselessly up and down the wave line of Grosse, peering for a body or a bit of wreckage from the missing crafts, his great beard matted with ice, his clothes fringed with icicles that broke with every step and gesture.

"The Lard has took them," Taylor heard him reiterating loudly and solemnly as he strode back to the warming beacons beginning to blaze on North Beach. "The Lard has took them all. Quiet they do lie in the tomb o' the Lard!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE SOUL OF THE ISLAND WORLD

IN THE living-room of Boucher's house Boucher himself and Taylor sat smoking in front of the fireplace, flaming brightly with salted driftwood, grim flotsam of the seas. The dusk of the Winter evening had descended as they waited for Madeline to dress for the festive occasion that called them forth—the opening of Boucher's new farm buildings on the upland farm he maintained in conjunction with his other businesses.

Jean Louis, his man of all work, a famous figure in the Islands, a watcher at strange hours and a stroller in strange places, managed the farm for him and by a rigid process of natural selection standardized its products, in which process he had the aid of Madame Louis and the twins Philip and Bonaparte.

Jean was occupying the new house for the first time, and, according to custom, he had invited all the farmers and villagers, including Madeline, Taylor and his landlord Boucher to celebrate the opening. On the snowy road outside they could hear the crowds of villagers already passing on their way up, clamorous with merry voices and shouts of laughter, breaking into a French chanson under the windows and chorusing it loudly on the clear night air.

Inside her room Madeline caught up the refrain of the chanson, and her deep contralto vibrated on the ears of Taylor and Boucher sitting outside in the dark.

"She is happy, very happy," murmured Taylor, his eyes turning to Boucher through the flickering flamelight that sent the shadows dancing grotesquely about ceiling and walls.

"Why not?" puffed Boucher. "She is young, and the soul of youth is as light as youthful feet. Wait till you see! Jean Louis's house will hum this night. Ah, here she is!"

Madeline was dressed as Taylor had seen her the first night he was wrecked on the Islands, dressed in that filmy creation of tan with the laced bodice that betrayed the swell of her breasts. Arms and neck were bare,

Digitized by Google

milk-white, beautiful, beautiful as the carmine lips, the creamy rose cheeks, the Mediterranean blue eyes or the dun-colored crown of hair she wore in ripples like the twining of the sea-weed in the tide.

The picture she made, framed in the glow of the fireplace and backed by the high light reflections of the polished pewter and brass on the mantel, was one that brought Taylor involuntarily to his feet.

"I've kept you waiting," she apologized, all smiling.

"Ah, but it was good to wait here, in the fire glow," he told her. And as Boucher's chair scraped noisily in his getting up, added in an undertone; "Wait—for you!"

She only smiled the more, till those great eyes were like the mellow azure of Summer skies and cocked her head with a debonair movement to listen to the pilgrimage going by.

"The others are all on their way!" she exclaimed. "We must hurry or else we will be late, and one never knows what one misses by being late at the house of Jean Louis."

She slipped into a voluminous, close-muffling coat of genuine sealskin and quickly buttoned on high-cut overshoes of black cloth over her dancing slippers while her father and Taylor got into their great-coats. Since the night the steamer *Blavet* was crushed in the ice floes and they themselves nearly lost in the *Blavet's* boats upon the North Beach, Taylor had discarded his oilskins as too cold for the advancing Winter season and as quite unfitted for a sojourn ashore. He had outfitted anew at the stores in the matter of boots, caps and clothing, for the merchants in the Islands knew his standing as a leading merchant himself in Gloucester and he could draw on them for credit till he got home and take whatever supplies he willed.

So blue cheviot had replaced the oilskins, and in place of heavy sea boots he wore laced ankle shoes, of fine dongola kid, soft as a glove, light of sole, flexible, springy, fit soles to thread the merry mazes with which the Islanders were wont to lighten the gloomy Winter.

Jean Louis's place was only a short distance up the road, so they did not trouble with sleds or charettes. Taylor gave Madeline his arm on the slippery track, worn smooth by the feet of many passers-by and polished by the gliding sled runners, and they followed Boucher around the bend of the road and turned up the hill through the lane to the farm. The crest of the hill was a blaze of light from the windows of the new whitewashed house, a blaze augmented with rows of varicolored lanterns rimming the crest and descending the slope in a double line some ten feet apart.

Between these lines Jean Louis had iced a steep slide, and upon the emerald surface toboggans and sleds were roaring down. Ere they were aware, and just as they reached the top of the steps that climbed the hill, Madeline, Taylor and Boucher were seized by a sturdy crowd of coasters, flung upon an empty toboggan and launched down the slide amid a pelting shower of snowballs. It was Jean Louis's introduction to the festivities of the night, for Jean was a character among his fellow characters and his house was the abode of merriment unexpected.

With a longer climb to face and less foothold than the steps had afforded, the three got off the slackening toboggan and, drawing it after them and chortling at their innocence, scrambled up the steep. Continually sleds whizzed past them, filled with overcoated lads and maidens, glowing-cheeked, bright-eyed, with their vivid mittens and warm-hued scarfs and sashes waving in a web of color against the glittering ice, all under the mellow staining of the multicolored lanterns. The spirit of youth, the soul of the Island world, the honest, happy, wholesome soul without jealousy, envy or covetousness radiated from the flight as it went by.

Taylor felt the magnetism of the happy crowd, and he silently marveled at the contrast between this life far from huge cities and the ramified suburbs of cities that the octopus railroads have made and that mainland life he had had reason to know. Here was peace of mankind; yonder was the grind and rush of mankind's machinery with the struggle and bellow and universal competition, with all the hate and lust and class war inevitable in a close-packed human horde.

Yet small opportunity had he for philosophizing as they were carried in the ever-increasing crowd toward the door. The Islanders themselves were not given to socialistic philosophizing. Among them was no Ghetto, no slum, no ladder of class. Good fellowship, camaraderie emanated

Digitized by Google

from them, and from man to man passed the bond of greeting and jest. The door they swarmed about opened directly into the big kitchen, and inside on the cleared floor a jam of both sexes was closely wedged. Taylor craned his head to see a man standing upon a table making a gesturing speech of welcome.

"That's Jean Louis, Walter!" laughed Madeline, standing on tiptoe to see. "Isn't he a sight?"

"By Jove, isn't he?" agreed Taylor.

For Jean Louis, wild of hair and mustache, eagle-featured, swarthy-skinned, so tall that his pompadour touched the ceiling in the dynamics of his acrobatic address was clothed in baggy homespun, booted in homemade galoshes of sealskin with his flapping pantaloons banded about below the knees with twine.

"And there are the twins and Madame Louis!" Madeline added.

Philip and Bonaparte perched like birds upon the corners of the table that held their erratic father, a gaunt pair, awkward with the unfilled angularity of boyhood, their black pates slicked with seal oil, alike as two owls and regarding the uproarious gathering with the solemnity of two young owls. Madame Louis, as fat as her husband was thin, buxom and embarrassed, in a waist of wrinkled taffeta and a kirtle that her mother had worn in her belledom, pulled Jean's pantalooned leg so that he nearly slipped off the table in his dancing dramatics.

"Monsieur le Boucher!" she whispered loudly. "Look, you goat, Jean Louis—your own landlord in the doorway!"

Jean came to in time to back away from the table edge.

"Ah, *messieurs*," he announced unruffled, with a wave of his arm toward Boucher, "here is Monsieur le Boucher the proprietor himself, the man whose new roof shelters me and Madame and the twins and whose bounty we proceed to enjoy to-night. *Messieurs*, M. le Boucher will address you himself!"

Jean bowed and leaped down into the throng, and in his place the laughing proprietor was helped on to the table to add his welcome to Jean's and proclaim for all the freedom of the new house and barns and bid them strike up the music and the dance without delay.

Instantly the jammed floor was cleared by a rush. Wraps were flung to hooks on the wall. Jean Louis and two more seated themselves in chairs upon the table with their violins and played their merry hearts out to the trip and shuffle of the thronging feet upon the fresh-waxed floor. A gay scene, youth on wings with Taylor and Madeline in the flight, while the aged members of the community looked on from the chairs and benches ranged round the walls or from the niches of the doorways of other rooms that opened off the kitchen.

From their chairs these old ones looked, and they looked, also, from the end of the long aisles of their buried boyhood and maidenhood, their trembling fingers faltering over the lap work they had brought with them, their eyes glistening at many a fleeting recollection, their toothless lips murmuring soundless in the noise of the dance over many a tender reminiscence. Old mothers and grandmothers Taylor saw, clad in calico or homespun, knitting wool socks, weaving cunning baskets or even hooking rugs of loud patterns while the dance swung on.

Old men, too, he saw, men bent and crippled by the sea, huddled round the stoves with their canes and pipes, living their adventurous lives again in story form. These gave him a welcoming hand when at last Madeline went off to help Madame Louis with the supper and he sat down to rest. Adventurer of the seas was he himself though he had not half their years to his tally, and they recognized in him the breed of his father whom many of them had known.

Hardly a man was there whose round of life had not been one long hazard. With men of many islands and many harbors he shook hands and exchanged tales, tales reeled off in rapid French that ran into many volumes in the mere space of the evening.

Their friendship and fellowship warmed Taylor's heart, for in all that gathering none stood aloof from him but Jacques Beauport. Inscrutable as ever, Jacques went about darkly, dancing little and that little with Madeline when he could steal her away from Taylor and the jolly, insistent Island youths. Somehow Jacques did not seem to be in tune with the general camaraderie. Several people plainly feared him. Others evidently mistrusted him, although Taylor could see that they did not wish to offend one with whom they traded.

Digitized by Google

Now suddenly from the table which the musicians had deserted, the solemn twins, Philip and Bonaparte, blew two blasts on squawky horns, and immediately the men, old and young, straight and crippled, rose from their chairs. It was the signal for supper, and the chairs were needed for a purpose. In came planks from the woodshed, borne by lusty boys with snow upon their shoulders and bare heads, betraying the making of a storm outside.

The planks were laid in lines up and down the big kitchen with their ends supported by the chairs, and thereon the whole assemblage sat down in a body, handkerchiefs upon their knees for serviettes to fragrant coffee, lobster sandwiches, cake, luscious jellies made from hillside berries and ice-cream that might have come stiff from the pole.

Amid chatter and laughter and snatches of song the supper was served by the side-splitting Jean Louis, Madame Louis, the busy twins, the gracious Madeline, the enthusiastic Taylor and many others who volunteered to keep the hungry company supplied. When the recess that followed the supper gave the musicians a rest and allowed opportunity for the clearing of the kitchen again, Jean Louis conducted the whole younger element out through the flurries of snow to inspect the new barns, of which he was justly proud, showing them the stables, cattle, horses and sheep, the mellow granary, the redolent hay-mow and the survey of the farm which Boucher had caused to be made to settle nuisances arising out of overlapped holdings and a print of which was tacked upon the granary door for all concerned to see.

It was a nuisance prevalent among the farmers gathered about the print and also among those of other districts and one which sometimes resulted in ill-feeling among the more bruskly inclined. For in the beginning under France there had never been any permanent holdings on the Magdalens. Uninhabited as Cartier had first found them, they were mere Summer stations for the bold merchants of St. Malo and Dieppe and other ports whom King Louis the Fifteenth sent across the seas. But, ceded to England under treaty in seventeen hundred and sixty-three, they were peopled by a few Acadians and when later given by George the Third of England in seventeen hundred and ninety-eight as a grant to Sir Isaac Coffin, Coffin had instituted leases and rents and the already-established found that the independent holdings of beach and farm land they had taken up were more or less confused as to boundaries.

Jean Louis, however, staked within his survey, would encroach on no man's land, he loudly declared, slapping the blue print explosively. He paid his rent and respected and considered his neighbor and himself in the sight of God, and no man could do more, nor could the Coffins find any better tenant in the length of the Magdalen Isles! *Voilà!* But that was the way to have peace of mind in this world.

And he swung his lantern round and round, showing them the cunning points of the framing, the well-slanted rafters overhead, and while they all stared up at the roof, blew out the light, dived out of the barn and raced for the house, leaving the shrieking, laughing crowd to grope its way through the dark.

"*Tiens*," he greeted them from the table, violin in hand, as they came clamoring in to the light, "perhaps many a maid was kissed in that dark, eh? Well, well, what are lips rosy for? On with the dance, *mes enfants*, on with the dance!"

Again the house was filled with the merry sound of the fiddles and the joyous trip of agile feet, dancing, dancing into the small hours while the old ones waited—till at last the old ones rebelled and dragged the younger members of their households laughing off the floor.

Madeline, her father and Taylor were for walking home as they had come, but Jean Louis would not hear of it. It was snowing outside, he contended, and masking the icy spots where one could get a bad fall. He would have the sled up in a moment. Flinging his sealskin cap on his head, he darted away with his lantern for the barn where by the light of other lanterns other horses were being harnessed to other sleds and charettes to carry the home-goers from a distance.

The house was ablaze with lamplight, the glow from the windows falling warmly across the flurries and drifts, and upon the slide on the hill the multicolored lanterns still burned with a weird Oriental touch amid the snows. Toboggans and sleds were skimming down in a final flight, some speeding down as the quickest way of launching them on their homeward path to the

Digitized by Google

village, others reclimbing for a last blood-tingling spurt before they bade Madame Louis good-by and leaped in with their loads.

In the midst of the turmoil of departing, of the laughter, shouting and the creaking and whining of the conveyances, Jean drove up with his queer boxed sled for the Bouchers and their guest.

"Come quickly!" he yelled. "My beast is wild in this bedlam. Philip, Bonaparte, stay at home. You should have been in your beds by now."

"Oh, let them come!" pleaded Madeline, kissing Madame Louis good-by and picking up the twins, one under each arm. "They have been little men all evening and it is not far. Now, Jean Louis, we are all aboard. Whip up!"

With the twins solemn and sleepless to the last, snuggling against her as they tooted their squawky horns in the moist snow-filled air, they sped down the hill in the teeth of the brewing storm and flew around the bend of the road. Bells were jingling all about them, charettes and sleds spinning and slewing, their occupants whistling and singing and indulging in snow fights with an exuberance that a whole evening of dancing had not exhausted.

Jean Louis had to run the gantlet several times before he dropped his passengers in front of their door and, circling round to their good-bys, went tearing back with Philip and Bonaparte still tooting between their yawns.

CHAPTER XV

EXILED

THAT storm was the first of the violent Winter storms that cut off the Magdalens decisively from all the outside world. Like the jumbled flotsam shoal-stranded in the heart of the Gulf they lay, smothered under the combined fury of wind and wave assaulting simultaneously from every side.

From the ruddy wave-girt shores of Prince Edward Island the west wind charged upon them across three-score untrammeled miles of water. From Cape Breton Island the south wind headed its forces over a five-score stretch. Newfoundlandward the eastern gales rampaged for nearly as great a distance before they broke with their insane strength. While down a sea lane of many unobstructed leagues the Labrador blizzards hurled the bitter frosts and snows and Arctic ice-packs upon the pitiless North Beach.

Long as he had followed the sea, Taylor had never seen such might of the elements. Even the Winter gales of the Banks did not approach these ravaging storms. Like typhoons of the Orient they blew, like monsoons of the South Seas, always for days at a time, often for weeks, tearing away huge fragments of sand and cliff, making the very Islands themselves tremble on their foaming lava bases as if they might disintegrate suddenly and disappear into the sea with the human horde upon them.

Under that fury and cruelty the Islanders crouched, passive, patient, waiting for the Spring. Born of exiles in the beginning, reared from less than a dozen homeless families wandering out of Evangeline's Land, they were not a race to complain of this their annual exile from the rest of the world, and for Taylor the peaceful gliding of their lives struck amazing contrast to the primitive savagery of their environment.

He knew the Magdalens fairly well, as all Atlantic-faring seamen knew them, lying as they did on the direct ocean route from Quebec to European ports. For theirs was a history that went back into the dim past to the earliest peopling of the continent. Owned by England or France at several different periods, once part of the proud free Colony of Newfoundland but now part of the Province of Quebec and included in the storied Gulf county of Gaspé, theirs was a checkered record. Landmarks to the eyes of Cartier and Champlain they had loomed in the long ago and served as bases for warring armadas in the days of round shot and sail.

All this, and more, Taylor knew, but he had known it with the outsider's knowledge, with the alien's point of view. For the law forbade American fishermen from landing to dry and cure their fish except in unoccupied bays and harbors, and so never before had he mingled with the inhabitants to such an extent as he did now. Living as a guest in Boucher's house, he saw the lives of the Magdaleners moving in their daily routine although that routine was of necessity cramped and confined in this iron-bound season of the year.

There was no work at all for them to do in the Winter. They would begin with the

Digitized by Google

seals in the Spring before the offshore fishing took them in pursuit of lobster, herring, mackerel and cod. Just at present they kept to the houses under the biting cold and blizzard-like storms or in the lulls wandered along the icy shores looking wearily out across the fields of the floes for the seals that indubitably would be drifting down early. On the snow-cloaked hills the youth of the Islands flung forth daily for the coasting whenever the weather permitted, and instead of the shrill shrieking of the tempest, the ring of their sleds and their happy shouts were like sweet music in Taylor's ears.

Right heartily he and Madeline joined in the recreation, for the exercise was demanded because of the indoor life, and the swift plunge down the glassy slopes against the frosty air set the blood tingling through their most sluggish veins.

Beautiful she was in her house costumes but many times more beautiful she seemed to Taylor darting down by his side upon the whizzing sled, her face glowing under the wintry wind, the warm, potent magnetism of her self exhaling through her furred cloak, her cheeks painted rose and carmine, her eyes gleaming brighter than the frost crystals starring the crust.

Beautiful she was, and under the evening lamplight beyond a doubt more beautiful still when the gay parties filled the spacious whitewashed houses scattered round the more sheltered beaches and snuggling in the hollows of the hills. While the old folks sat around with their knitting or hooking of patterned rugs, the younger set played games and danced half the night through. The weary weather had to be whiled away, and they sped it as best they could with the dance, the game, the sledding party, the phonograph, the pipe and the tale.

Weird tales Taylor heard from the lips of the old men huddled close to the red-hot stoves that throbbed and roared with the wood of wrecked vessels with which the Islands' shores were strewn. Of these same wrecks they told him, of the very vessels whose ribs shot up in flames before his eyes, of the greatest gales that ever smoked the sea, of seal hunters cast away upon the floes, of strange ships doomed on the dread North Beach where he himself had been cast with the *Blavet's* boats, of ghosts of the drowned that walked on Deadman's Island.

But it was the evening dances Taylor liked best, gliding over the clean waxed floors with Madeline as his partner, shuffling to a virile two-step on the phonograph or swinging to a languorous waltz upon the violins. Day and night they seemed to find complete satisfaction in each other's company, and if Boucher noticed the deep intimacy that had sprung up between his daughter and his guest, he gave no sign. He had spoken once. He was not the man to speak twice.

Otherwise, and in any weather, Boucher was always the refined Acadian, the generous host of that first night of Taylor's landing on Amherst, solicitous of the comfort of any one under his roof, courteous to a fault.

Jacques Beauport was not living with the Bouchers but had opened his own Island house, now that he was stranded here with the remainder of the *Blavet's* crew, and was looking over his fishing station, getting things in readiness though the season was as yet a little early and the ice was piled about his fish sheds on the beach. Almost daily Beauport came to the Boucher house, but somehow it appeared that Taylor had taken the place that used to be his. It was Taylor who went sledding with Madeline on the hills, dancing in the evenings, wandering on the floe-strewn shores to coax the elusive Spring.

Nor were the villagers slow to note that Taylor now walked where Beauport formerly walked. They wagged their heads and their tongues rattled, not spitefully or maliciously but merely as one would pass the news. Maybe Madeline Boucher was not going to marry that lucky, wealthy Jacques Beauport after all! *Tiens*, here was another on whom her eyes beamed more softly—a handsome stranger! *Oui*, and a bold deep seaman! Was he the man to run away from a winsome maid just because. . . .

And the oldest of them cited the case of his father whose tale had traveled the length of many coasts. One could see he had the frame and the spirit of his father, and those well-sculptured features—they were the gift of his dead mother to win him a beautiful *femme* like herself.

Yes, yes, they knew much of Walter Taylor. His father had left him a wealthy fish merchant's business in Gloucester. He had gone to many schools, those higher schools where men rowed mad boat races in nothing but their shirts and fought lustily with

Digitized by Google

laughing hearts upon strange football fields, till his father was lost at sea and he had to step in and take over the business and sail his own craft to appease his adventurous soul.

And Madeline, had she not schooling to match, the music and everything that she had received in far Quebec? *Oui*, it was better this way. Youth to youth, and who would deny that Beauport was old enough to be her father? *Certainement*, it was better even under the wrath of Jacques, although one could not tell for certain how it would end. Jacques Beauport's tongue was oddly still, but there would be trouble yet. One could never fathom that inscrutable Jacques!

Taylor, too, had the same impression as the shrewd villagers, although he felt it in a different way. Bad blood there had always been between him and Beauport, their enmity had never been as bitter as in its present stage. With every visit of Jacques to the Boucher home, Taylor could sense his increasing antagonism, but the peculiar thing about it was Taylor's conviction that there was no worry over Madeline's attitude coupled with that antagonism. There was resentment, but no anxiety. Beauport was sure of Madeline.

That was it! He was sure, and that was what puzzled. Why was he so sure? There was no engagement. Boucher himself had been blunt about that. Could there be any taint? But one look at Madeline gave the swift lie to that thought. What then? Did the inscrutable Beauport hold some domination over Boucher himself?

The idea set Taylor to thinking, and he realized that though Boucher lived such an important public life on Amherst, he really knew very little about him. Moreover, he could not ask for information. No observant man would have attempted to pry into Boucher's affairs, for he was a person who did not talk overmuch about himself and who strictly minded his own business when that business was anything less than the public welfare.

Yet the idea persisted and instinctively, almost unconsciously, Taylor associated it with Beauport's apparent surety. Also, it was plain that though Jacques never doubted his ultimate possession of Madeline, he frowned upon her caprices and her deep intimacy with Taylor and registered against Taylor himself the wrath he perhaps would have visited upon her had he been less certain. Still, through all that Winter of exile, no reproach or epithet or challenge did Beauport hurl at Taylor, although his antagonism flamed openly and yet more openly till the latter saw very clearly that another and deciding clash might come any day.

CHAPTER XVI

THE VANGUARD

THUS they whiled the wintry days away! Roaring January had gone out and erratic February in its wake, bitter with freezing fog, hail, sleet and snow. It was the beginning of the month of March, and after the heavy gales that heralded its opening by swooping down from the north a calm had fallen with a balmy touch in the air that brought the first suggestion of Spring.

Madeline, her father and Taylor were just finishing breakfast when in rushed Jean Louis, that picturesque, strange manager of Boucher's farm, yelling in great excitement.

"What then, Jean Louis?" demanded Boucher. "Have you bogged my cattle in the quicksands already?"

"*Non*, seals—seals!" he announced tersely and dashed away as fast as he had come.

"Those heavy gales have drifted them down here at last!" exclaimed Boucher as they all rose hastily from the table.

"Yes," nodded Taylor, "it's been blowing direct from the Strait of Belle Isle."

"And it means the Spring is right at hand," prophesied Madeline her wonderful eyes holding Taylor's with an enigmatic gleam.

"True, and your Island release, as well!" he added with a trace of wistfulness in his smile. "The Magdalens won't be isolated long now. The inter-island boats will soon be running again."

"But certainly," concurred Boucher, getting into his outer coat, "we'll soon have communication now, even if our message has missed making some port. Although I hardly think it could have missed making some port or other."

"Our interference with it couldn't have had any effect on it, could it?" asked Taylor as the three passed out along the slushy road.

Digitized by Google

"No, I don't see that it could, unless Jacques didn't head the barrel up properly, and that's not likely. My goodness, look at the villagers streaming out on the floes! Every one's taking a hand in the hunt."

Amherst Island though elongated was not very wide at the place they were crossing it, and ahead of them they could see large numbers of hunters making for the beach with all speed. Many were already upon the floes, hauling after them boats fastened upon low sleds made for the purpose, much like the combination used by arctic explorers, so that they could either drag them upon their runners over the solid ice pans or launch through wide leads or lakes of water between the pans.

Jean Louis had his own boat waiting on the beach, and he was beckoning them impulsively.

"Come on! But come on!" he urged. "I will take you all. The seals are close inshore."

But Madeline shook her head. It was a sight of slaughter, and she did not care to look on it except from a distance, so Jean Louis rushed out alone toward the fringe of the herd which they could easily glimpse, a dark line, thin and straggling, looped about on the spotless floes. Harp seals, Taylor and Boucher made them out to be, harps together with their whitecoat whelps, part of the vast, mysterious herd, the vanguard of that mighty, mobile army that annually migrated from the arctic and split at the Strait of Belle Isle, one section drifting down Newfoundland's East Coast, the other section following the West Coast into the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Taylor's eye glistened as he watched the hunters in their rush. He had gone to the ice for seals himself on the front (East Coast ice-fields) but the hunt here with the combination of sled and boat was materially different.

They handled the combination with wonderful skill, the ice pans booming to the swift dash of their runners, the spray flying overhead as they shot their boats into and across intervening lanes. Before the harps took alarm they were among the herds, smiting mother and whelp alike and pursuing the agile animals from floe to floe. On high blazed the sun, shining red through a nebulous Spring mist, and its rays striking down blended with the red-sprayed floes and the red-stained clothes of the hunters.

Gaffing the seals and throwing the bodies into the boats, they went, darting and floating hither and thither, Beauport and his men among them. For Jacques was never absent where a dollar might be minted, and he had in mind the sunken *Blavet* down under his very feet somewhere.

But before the last harp was gaffed or had effected escape into open water, a stiff wind had sprang up and the hunters, accepting the warning of the ever-opening floes, came riding their boats ashore lest they might be carried away on the mighty breast of the Gulf. Many a man of their villages they had seen thus cast away to be disfigured with frost bite, deprived of a limb, stricken with pneumonia or consumption or to disappear in the Northern blizzard and never be heard of again.

How bitter, Taylor thought, was the battle the cruel sea waged against them, how niggard with sustenance they claimed as their right, ever laying the traps of torture and the nets of death for their feet! And what an epic picture they made, these Islanders, a picture grim, sublime in their colossal endeavor, levying toll in season on their none too fertile fields for part of their living and wresting the remainder from the cavern hoards of the miserly deep!

Today they were lucky to all come ashore before his eyes. Tomorrow they might not be so lucky. Yet they gave no thought to the morrow. They rejoiced that even a small section of the vanguard of the seal herds had fallen as spoil to them, and their laughter rang loud as they landed their boats upon the beach with the doughty Jacques Beauport at their head.

"How now?" asked Boucher. "Jacques, are the old herds coming back to us? There seems to be a greater number today than usual."

"In a measure, yes, but nothing like there used to be," lamented Beauport. "I have seen us take them by the thousands whereas now we count in hundreds. No, the herds will never come again on these island shores as they used to come. There are too many sealers on the front and too many here in the Gulf to snap them up before they reach the Magdalens. And after all, the steel steamer is the only thing to hunt them in nowadays, and if it had not been for Taylor the *Blavet* would have been taking a good harvest out in yonder waters at this moment."

Digitized by Google

"If it hadn't been for your own spite, you mean, Beauport!" amended Taylor. "You've only yourself to blame for bringing your steamer to the Magdalens in the Winter season. It was only your reckless hatred of me that made you offer Lieutenant Grande your steamer to follow me."

Beauport glared, the blood mounting in his face, made as if to blurt forth his epithets, then smothered the growl in his throat as his eyes rested on Madeline. Abruptly he turned aside to direct his men in the hauling of the seals away to the tiered seal vats of Grindstone where they would be skinned, stripped of their fat and the fat rendered into oil.

Taylor, too, turned away with Madeline, leaving Boucher, always interested in the welfare of his Islanders, making the rounds of the hunters assuring himself as to the individual success in this their first harvest of the sea.

"That was rude of Jacques," she censured with a moue of her lips that mocked and laughed at the same time. "You told him the truth, too, and that will not make him less rude."

"No, Madeline, and I think the time is coming when he will have to be more than rude," confessed Taylor significantly.

CHAPTER XVII

THE *MONTCALM*

THE coming of the seal herds marked the breaking of the Winter, and the opening of the Grindstone seal vats ushered in the first industry of the Islands' active season. Nor were the other industries long in following, for hard on the heels of the violent March gales blew the dank fogs and pelting April rains, cloaking the shores in impenetrable palls, sweeping clear the icy bays and channels like an immense streaming broom.

Strange wizard hands touched the entire group of the Magdalens. One hand lifted away the blanket of Winter. The other hand laid upon them the green mantle of Summer. Bright as unboxed jewels they glimmered in all the ecstasy of the sudden transformation, a watery world of glint and sparkle, of light and color, of giant cliff and imaged shadow, magically hued with the pearly foam on the outer reefs, amber sun on the red capes and silver quicksands quaking to the pea-green sprawling tides.

Ever quick to spring in snow zones once the snow is gone, the growth shot from the soil. Brave breezes rippled the new sedges of the marshes, sang among the growing meadow grasses, swayed the leafing berry bushes on the hillsides. Everywhere was the mellow glow of Summer, the shimmer of birds' wings, the flash of leaping fish.

Grazing sheep and cattle let loose after their wearisome Winter housing, dotted the pastures. Children played in the fields of springy turf, smiting their yarn balls to and fro, racing with wolfish dogs or sailing toy boats in miniature inlets with all the bravado of a lusty manhood yet to come.

While upon the low beaches and high beetling cliffs the returning bird flocks swarmed, some in migration to the arctic shores, more to nest on the rocks that formed their breeding ground. Hardly a moment that the air was not alive with the feathered navigators, snowbirds blowing by like late flurries, eider ducks driving north for the Polar seas, curlew homing on the Labrador, tern the lone far farers of wind and storm!

Yet though Taylor gazed on an Island world transformed, teeming with life, bright with color, there still persisted that hint of somber remoteness, that dreary isolation, that sense of poising in an eternal void. For though the bays and harbors, the channels and the shallow inland lakes of Amherst were clear of ice and the fishermen overhauling boats and nets upon the beach, the loose floes still covered the outer seas. Especially were they scattered to the south and west in the path of mainland vessels crossing.

In vain Madeline and her father looked for an answer to their message. No steamer smoke blurred the ocean horizon. It was true that the Islanders were not exactly in want, for monopoly was frowned upon by their sturdy independent natures.

Excepting big fish merchants, who handled most of the Magdalens' catch and who generally hailed from outside ports, one man was, as a rule, as rich as another. Those with cupboards plenteously stored shared with those whose larders were lean. Some fish were already beginning to come in from the shore waters, firm and delicious fish from the cool caverns of the Gulf, and the early vegetables would soon be springing in their exotic growth, but the need of the

Digitized by Google

moment was bacon, flour and salt—which latter article their trade demanded in large quantities.

So in the second week of May the possibility of getting a small sailing boat through the floes once they loosened a little more began to be discussed. Taylor at once volunteered to sail the vessel if the attempt should be made, since, the Magdalens being under the jurisdiction of Quebec and not of Newfoundland, there was nothing to prevent his leaving the Islands if he could.

"You see, I'm a deep seaman," he explained to Madeline, "and I think I would be surer to make the mainland than any of your shore fishermen here. I don't say I'm a better sailor than many of them, but they haven't had the offshore experience and the sailing in ice that I've happened to strike on the Newfoundland and the Labrador coasts. So they might not know how to meet conditions just as well. That's the point."

"But you mustn't try it yet," objected Madeline with a shiver of apprehension. "The floes are too dangerous yet, even if an attempt is necessary in the end."

"Yes," corroborated Boucher, taking his pipe from his mouth where he sat, "it is only risking destruction yet. In a week or ten days perhaps——"

Boucher paused, for the face of Jean Louis, that watcher at strange hours, that stroller in strange places, appeared at the window. His face was red with running, his lips spluttering in his haste for words.

"A—a—steamer!" he stammered. "I was climbing on the top of Entry, and I saw it. Hurry! You can catch its smoke in a moment."

"At last! At last!" exclaimed Boucher, suddenly shaken with nervousness.

He leaped up, pocketing his pipe with a trembling hand, seized his hat and hurried out.

Madeline's eyes drew Taylor's as they rose to follow, and in them there was reflected a chaos of feeling that he could not definitely analyze. He saw, or imagined he saw, at one and the same time, joy and disappointment, relief and chagrin, elation and depression. Yet only for an instant did Madeline let him fathom them. Then she was speeding breathlessly down to the beach with him running at her heels.

Before them the shelving sands of Amherst sloped down to the harbor and swept out in a long bar, dotted with fishermen's shanties, to end in a hammerhead of rock that lay like a breakwater fending off the seas from the precariously perched houses. Bar and upper beach were covered with villagers thronging at the word Jean Louis had spread as he ran through with his news. They were pointing out to one another a dark smudge in the sky beyond the six-hundred-foot cliffs of Entry Island sheering loftily into the clouds.

The clouds themselves, copper colored when the sun struck them, were veiled every alternate moment with delicate drifting mist, but the smoke smudge was plain in the gossamer veil like a somber hand raised before some supernatural appearance. Still, such was the deceptive state of the atmosphere that they could not tell how near or how far off was the vessel whose funnel made the smudge till without warning she suddenly drifted clear through a rent in the veil.

"Is it the Pictou boat?" cried Madeline excitedly.

"No, an ice-breaker, I think, Madeline," decided Taylor, straining his eyes.

Before they could confirm his decision the vessel disappeared in the mist as abruptly as it had emerged, and as if to tantalize the Islanders at the climax of their waiting, it played the trick with infinite repetition.

Now they glimpsed it close inshore, now miles away in the seeming hazy distance. At one moment it appeared to float in the clouds instead of the sea, at another drifted low like a derelict, shadowy-hulled, showing nothing above her careening rail. And sometimes they gazed on her forward deck alone, sometimes on her after deck, as if she had broken in two on the Pearl Reef and was slowly sinking to the bottom. But at last the sun struck her fairly, and they saw the stark lift and loom of her smashing a path through the loose ice pans.

"Yes, an ice-breaker, Madeline!" exclaimed Taylor.

"Yes, yes, Walter, you were right," she breathed in exaltation.

"*Oui*, the *Montcalm*," identified Boucher huskily. "The ice-breaker *Montcalm* as sure as we stand on this beach!"

The beach went wild at the sight of her steaming in through the entrance. Like madmen the villagers cheered and threw their caps into the air as they dashed for

Digitized by Google

their skiffs to meet her. Jacques Beauport's skiff was there and Jean Louis's and many more, and it was to Jean Louis's that Boucher hurried, eager to hear the first word of the *Montcalm's* captain.

"Come, Madeline; come Captain Taylor!" he urged fussily. "Jean Louis, are you ready with your skiff? I must be at her side to greet her captain!"

CHAPTER XVIII

NO PASSENGER

JEAN LOUIS paused not for a few feet of water.

He ran out on the uncovered sands and splashed off the sands through the shallows, sending the spray flying in all directions. His sealskin galoshes were soaked, his pantaloons dripping, but the weather was warming, and little did the elongated stroller care. Half the time he was falling off the rocks into neck-deep water or being overturned in his boat when he ran on some submerged bar.

He threw his baskets and traps and nets to the sands out of the way of his passengers, the while a score of others did the same thing all about him, laughing and shrieking in contagion.

"Come on, Mademoiselle Madeline," he yelled. "Here is a dry seat for you!"

"Yes, come on, Madeline!" laughed Taylor blithely.

Caught in the excitement of the arrival, he seized her bodily and, holding her clear of the shallows, waded after Boucher into Jean's skiff.

With a blare of sound from her siren the *Montcalm* spurned the last ice pan aside and plowed the clear harbor into foam. Her anchor was scarcely down when she was beset by a whole fleet of skiffs manned by all manner of men of whom Boucher and Jacques Beauport were chief.

"Welcome, Captain, welcome!" greeted Boucher with emotion. "Never was a vessel more welcome. You can guess that for yourself. But we have waited a long time."

"Thank the storms for that, Boucher," laughed the *Montcalm's* captain. "It's been about the worst Winter I've ever seen. They got your message on the mainland in the early part but——"

"Eh, they got it after all?" interrupted Boucher. "I was beginning to doubt its making the mainland. They got it early, you say?"

"Yes, not long after it was sent," informed the captain. "The second week in December if I remember rightly! It was picked up at Port Hastings on Cape Breton."

"Then it must have drifted straight ashore from my hands!" cried Taylor.

"*Non*, from mine!" growled the voice of Beauport from the skiff next their own.

The eyes of the two men battled, till Boucher broke in on them.

"What matter whose hand?" he reproved, clothed with authority in this official moment.

He turned again quickly to the *Montcalm's* captain, as if he wished to prevent any possible outbreak between the two.

"How now, Captain? Are you ready to unload?"

"All ready if you are, Boucher," was the reply, "and let them be quick about it. I have other calls to make, and the weather doesn't look any too good."

Into the fleet of skiffs that part of the *Montcalm's* cargo consigned to Amherst was speedily lowered—pork, flour, salt and sundry other kinds of supplies—and the skiffs conveyed it ashore where it was piled into all manner of conveyances to be freighted up the beach, into boxes hauled like stoneboats, wheelbarrows, dog-carts, charettes drawn by steers or the hairy Island horses.

In company with the other skiffs Jean Louis's boat darted back and forth from the *Montcalm* to the Amherst beach assisting in the frantic ferrying. Along with Jean toiled Taylor and Boucher, and even Madeline herself lent a hand with lighter articles. A splendid picture, virile, rare, they made on the crescent waters, hiving round the ice-breaker, skimming ashore, bending under boxes, barrels and bundles or heaving them into the carts, a colorful picture filled with the brawn of men, the bright eyes of children, the rosy cheeks of maidens, the glow of women's kirtles, red, blue, purple and green against the golden sands.

Abruptly the *Montcalm's* siren blew as a signal that all the consignment was unloaded, and the skiffs backed hastily from her side.

It was then that the fussing Boucher

Digitized by Google

relaxed long enough to remember that another had waited almost as long as he himself for the coming of a mainland vessel.

"Ha! I forgot, Captain Taylor!" he burst out. "I do not wish to urge a guest to depart, but if you thought of—that is, there is need for hurry if——"

Boucher hesitated, a little embarrassed, for to his courteous nature it seemed that he was urging his guest to depart.

Jacques Beauport, however, standing in the skiff beside, hardly able to restrain himself from uttering the substance of the words Boucher had uttered, had no such gentlemanly diffidence.

"Wait, Captain, wait!" he bellowed, shaking an oar at the bridge of the *Montcalm*. "A passenger for you!"

Angry, mortified, Taylor involuntarily arose, one foot on the gunwale of the skiff, his hands clenching under the desire to choke Beauport where he stood with the mocking gleam of triumph in his eye. He did not know how to excuse himself for not going, how to force himself to go in accordance with Boucher's suggestion. The great truth that smote him was that he did not want to go—yet. Though the *Montcalm* waited, he could not take passage. Still imprisoned in the heart of the Gulf was he, though the path to the mainland showed plain, wave bound still by the surge of a mighty desire.

Helplessly his glance stole past Boucher to Madeline, and in his glance she read the silent pleading for her to make the decision for him, and a red spot burned on Madeline's cheek as she looked Jacques Beauport deliberately in the eye and without hesitation waved a hand to the captain of the *Montcalm*.

"Captain Taylor is waiting for the mail steamer!" she called in a bell-like, steady voice. "For the Pictou boat. Good-by, and a safe voyage back!"

Taylor's blood bounded at her words, and he exulted grimly at the sound of a smothered oath in Beauport's throat. Beauport darted one vicious look at them both and rapidly sculled his skiff to the *Montcalm's* side and clambered up as her anchor was weighed and she began to move. Once on her deck he cried to Codroy John to beach his skiff, and then disappeared into the captain's cabin.

"Well, where in the world is that Jacques going to go now?" demanded Boucher astonished, as they sat in the skiff on the harbor water and watched the *Montcalm* smoking out of the channel.

Madeline shrugged her pretty shoulders and made a motion for Jean Louis to take up the oars and row them ashore.

"Who knows?" she propounded, her eyes brimming with a mischievous light as they rested on Taylor. "Who knows where that man is going but that man himself? If I should guess, I might say he was going over to Grindstone Island to haul his early lobster traps. Captain Taylor, we will go over there some day soon with Jean Louis to Jean's own traps, and then we will know for sure!"

And in the sheer lightness of her heart she tossed her head at him as the skiff skimmed shoreward and raised the deep, powerful contralto voice he loved in the "Song of Amherst Beach" whose crescent wave line they were approaching:

The Amherst Beach with the low sun lines;
  There's a path of blood where his splendor shines!
    And the ocher glow
    Of the deep below
Leaps up like a light in the anchor chain,
  Like sea poppies red on the white spume flakes
Or maiden's cheeks as her vigil breaks
  When the looked-for sail is plain.
For upland calls to the upland breed
  With its balsam bed and its glowing gleed,
    With a pagan shout
    And a comrade stout
And thews that are born of the mountains broad;
  And each to the home that has suckled him,
Afar or near, be it gay or grim,
  Be it pineland sea or sod!
And each to the home that suckled him,
  Afar or near, be it gay or grim,
Be it pineland, sea or sod!

And Amherst calls from Demoiselle Hills
  To the pilgrim faint with his toil and ills;
    And she calls as well
    O'er the gliding swell
To voids at the hearts of the sailormen:
  A whisper of home on the opal wave,
A mem'ry stirred from the dead year's grave
  And quickened to life again!
Oh dream that dawned in the Yesterday!
  Oh, ye spindrift cast in the wild waves' play!
    A talisman true
    Will I treasure you
To show me the way to a cherished shrine;
  For long as the fathomless sea endures
Its bonds constrain you to paths of yours
  And my restless feet to mine!
For long as the fathomless sea endures
  Its bonds constrain you to paths of yours
And my restless feet to mine!

As into the depths of the sea, Taylor gazed into her wonderful eyes, his fibers

Digitized by Google

thrilling at the way she had chosen for him, and like a symbol of a day that might come he cherished her song in his heart.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FISHER'S GOLD

MADELINE was as good as her word, for upon the first visit of Jean Louis to his lobster traps off Grindstone, she and Taylor accompanied him. Jean had planted his underwater trap line the day before, and he was one of the early fishers abroad, for upon the Grindstone shore many traps were still piled up like cordwood, awaiting repairs or the coming of the lobster men to set them. Slatted boxes, shaped like half-cylinders, baited inside, weighted so that they would rest upon the bottom and lined to a floating buoy, were the traps, and the industry of catching and canning was the great mainstay of those who lived on Grindstone.

Early as it was, the fishery was yielding good returns to the hardy ones engaged in it. Every day their numbers were being augmented as the ice cleared off the lobster grounds, and the canneries were now going at full blast. They had to take full advantage of these early Summer months, for in July and August the protecting hand of the law spread over the grounds, closing the season till September.

Out from the cluttered beach past the worn Grindstone cliffs tunneled and arched into fantastic shapes, they pulled to where Jean Louis had set his first trap with chopped herring rolled up in a net bag as bait, and from that first red block buoy he followed a line of the same bobbing red buoys all over the lobster grounds. Sometimes he secured a big-clawed monster, sometimes let a short one go, and at other times spilled out intruding crabs and set a new bag of bait to replace the pilfered one.

Taylor worked the boat. Madeline handed Jean Louis the little bags of bait, while Jean himself, wet and slippery from the incessant hauling of the traps, lined them in hand over hand to his gunwale and let them splash back again to their beds. Steadily they worked under a blazing hot sun that blistered the oily sea and set a million blends of color crawling and twining on the silky wave-crests. The halts were frequent, but with Taylor at the oars it was possible to cover several miles of Jean's trap line before noon and eat lunch on a gently rocking surge at the limits of the grounds.

Here and there they glimpsed other lines of buoys, painted in other colors, writhing over the smooth green hills of water, for every man had his individual mark to tell him where his trap line strung. Red, white, checkered, blue, green, yellow, black and combinations, varied even more widely by a difference in shape, the buoys speckled the wave, and where the buoys ran out, the lines were floated with a bit of board, an empty bottle, or a tin sirup can.

Yet in all those patterns, search as they might, they failed to find the mark of Jacques Beauport on any traps.

"His buoy is a brown ball, and it is easy to see," Jean Louis explained. "It is not here. He is not fishing for lobsters, neither he nor his men."

"Then why did he fling off to Grindstone that day?" demanded Madeline. "The cod grounds are a long way from here."

"Maybe it was to see about his oil," hazarded Taylor. "He must have had quite a number of seals in the Grindstone vats."

"No, it was something else," she declared, shaking her head thoughtfully. "It was something that concerns you—and maybe me. I saw that in his manner. Besides, he has not been to our house since."

It was true that he had not appeared at the Boucher home where he had always been a daily visitor. More than that, they had not seen him at all anywhere for some time. He had not left the islands on the *Montcalm*, for others had spoken to him, on the cod grounds, over at Grand Entry on Coffin Island, and also at Byron Island where Kellan of the mainland had come by schooner and opened his Summer fishing station once more. But he shunned the Amherst beaches, and his attitude puzzled them, for up till this moment he had shown no desire to avoid Taylor but rather to provoke a conflict.

Still, there was no fathoming the man and his moods at all, and they knew nothing for certain. So they put him out of their minds as they sculled through the lazy afternoon, hauling the rest of the lobster traps.

A little breeze sprang up toward evening, and Jean hoisted sail on his skiff as they ran for shore at Etang du Nord where they had left their charette. In the cool of the

Digitized by Google

drowned sunset, when the moon showed like a crescent of platinum in the hazy sky they ran in to that busy bay where skiffs and schooners were flocking in from their day's labors and lying with drooping sails while the fishermen and fisherwomen carried home the spoils.

Jean Louis was attending to the sails. Taylor had the tiller with Madeline sitting beside him as they fluttered in among the homing fleets, and at the picture they made under the silver moonlight she gripped Taylor's arm with tense fingers.

"Sweet Heaven!" she breathed. "That is a sight for island eyes, aye, and a balm for island hearts—the white sails, the brown beach, the houses beyond, homes against the burnished sky, Walter, the homes that make their world—yes, the world for all."

"Yes, Madeline," he whispered behind Jean Louis's back, "such a home as you will have of your own some time, perhaps, as I may have if the gods are kind, as—as we two may have if——"

"Listen," she interrupted, as he thought, with nervous haste and her hand trembling on his great arm through which his virile pulse was leaping, "there is a song of theirs", 'The Fisher's Gold' which the mermaids sing on the shoals. I wonder if they remember?"

Softly she sang, out of the magic of the moonlight, out of the floating skiff that was scarcely visible in the bay:

The fisher sails, the fisher sails above the sapphire seas
Come homeward with the ebbing tide and with the landward breeze;
The straining net has drawn today a harvest from afar,
But oh! a richer harvest waits within the harbor bar.
The ebb tide flows, the ebb tide flows full from the pulsing deep;
Flotsam and jetsam of the world the age-old law will keep;
So in his heart the sailor joys; like white sea-birds a-wheel,
Home with the homeward wind he swings, home on his slanting keel.

Madeline paused. A silence had fallen on the Etang du Nord beach. Faces of fishermen and the fisherwomen were turned seaward as if they had caught the voice of the mermaid of the shoals. Tenderly she went on:

The fisher songs, the fisher songs ring over cliff and sands,
Mingling with reapers' melodies on distant meadow lands;
But softer notes waft out to him beyond the gray sea wall—
The vesper chime, the housewife's chant, the merry children's call.
The fireside, the fireside and ships of flame a-sail,
The golden curls about his knees, the ears that drink his tale,
A hand that clasps his own brown hand, a love in silence told,
A heart that's safe within a heart—this is the fisher's gold!

Again the silence! No sound but the music of the moonlight on the pebbly wave-tops and the whisper of those waves on the painted beach!

Taylor slipped his big hand down till it found Madeline's.

"'A hand that clasps his own brown hand,'" he quoted, "'a love in silence told—

"'A heart that's safe within a heart—this is the fisher's gold.'"

He thought her hand responded to the pressure of his own as out of invisibility Jean Louis drove the skiff into the moon-etched foreground of the bay.

"Aye, your gold and mine, Madeline!" he whispered tenderly.

"*Très bien!*" blurted Jean Louis unexpectedly. "We could not find the brown ball, but we have found the user of the brown ball. Yonder is the man. Look—Jacques Beauport, as large as the devil lets him be!"

They stared in the direction Jean pointed with his tanned, water-wrinkled hand, and amid the fisher crowd grouped in a perfect pose of unconscious picturesqueness they glimpsed the Breton who had sulked for days from their sight.

In his loose casque and sabots he stood, gazing out under the shade of his hand against the dazzling moon glare, bending forward eagerly as if the siren song had drawn him to the water's edge.

"Madeline!" he called at sight of their skiff floating vague as a shadow beyond the clustered fleets. "Madeline, is that you?"

Taylor gave a growl of disgust. Jacques Beauport was the last person in the world he wanted to see at that moment, and it seemed that in another minute they must perforce touch the curved rim of the sands and step out on the beach into his undesired company.

But Madeline leaned over before they had threaded the maze of vessels and gave a swift direction to Jean Louis in a whisper.

Digitized by Google

"Quick, Jean, run past!" she pleaded. "As I love you and Madame Louis and the twins, run past for me. They can not be certain just what we are among so many sails, and if Jacques likes to sulk, why he may sulk a little longer!"

Jean Louis chuckled silently and murmured something under his breath. With a noiseless flutter of his sail he luffed up and Taylor sheered off obediently behind the screen of the canvas of the fishing boats so that they skirted the end of the Etang du Nord beach, flitting like a giant moth along the shore and out of sight.

When the beach had faded from their view in the silver vapor that exhaled from its surface they heard voices raised ashore in dispute as to the materialism of their crafts.

"It was a real sail. No ghost craft about it!"

"But there you are wrong. *Non, non,* nothing at all but a phantom!"

"You fools—" it was the surly voice of Jacques Beauport rating them—"I tell you it was nothing of the sort. It was an Amherst craft, and there were Amherst people in it, people I happen to know well."

"Bah, Jacques," with loud, derisive laughter, "bah! It was nothing but imagination told you that, imagination, *mon ami,* imagination and your eyes under the magic moon!"

And boisterously the whole beach took up the joke, laughing at Jacques till their sides ached and they had to set their loads of lobsters down to laugh some more.

CHAPTER XX

THE NIGHT CATCH

BY THE frowning lava bases of the island Jean Louis took the tiller and steered the skiff in the shadows.

"Ha, ha!" he chortled gleefully. "That will make Jacques Beauport boil, being laughed at like that. For, *mes enfants,* no man of his disposition likes to be laughed at. It is like laughter at a bull that makes the bull put down his head and charge the laughing one. If you hear of a fight there was on such and such a night on the Etang du Nord beach, why you will know Jacques Beauport was in it and we three innocents were the cause. *Voilà,* the next time I see him I will tell him a tall tale of a siren I saw on the shoals off Etang as I pulled my lobster traps in the dusk."

Taylor smiled quietly to himself, a grim elation thrilling his being, a sudden delirious madness akin to the moon madness that seemed to pervade the ocean night. It was patently plain to him that Madeline did not want the company of Jacques Beauport either, this night of witchery and mystery and moon madness. His hand sought and found hers on the gunwale as they glided along the red cliffs of Grindstone shining bronze under the transforming silver radiance, seeking the inter-island channels that could take them home by water instead of by land.

"I left the charette with Pete Lacrosse," the thoughtful Jean Louis informed them all at once. "So my fiery beast will be all right till morning. Pete is a good man to look after his own animals, and he will see that mine lacks nothing. In the morning I think I may haul the traps again."

By devious channels and pools that every rising tide was accustomed to leave behind it when it went out, now in one location, now in another, so that for boat on the water or for charette on the land the route was always changing, they wound about among the flooded bars and rocks between Grindstone and Amherst. Even under the light of the moon they could mark the extreme phosphorescence of the rippling waters, partially sheltered and full of shore images so that they gleamed as a web of watery lightning. Abruptly, and straight ahead of them, a shower of living, leaping fire broke weirdly from the web, like a fagot of burning brands cast up from the deep.

"What's that?" demanded Madeline. "A school of capelin?"

"No, it looks like menhaden!" Jean Louis declared, watching the showering brands closely.

"By Jove, no, I think you're mistaken, Jean!" exclaimed Taylor. "I'm pretty sure it's mackerel."

"So?" cried Jean, leaping up in excitement. "Then your eyes are truer than mine in this dazzle. I must find out, for if you are right, Captain, it is fiery dollars we see skimming yonder, and I would be a poor fool not to gather them in for madame and the twins."

Supple as an acrobat, he shinned up the stout mast of his skiff, his toes gripping like a cat's through the sealskin galoshes and his

Digitized by Google

banded pantaloons ballooning ludicrously as he hung silhouetted against the disk of the gibbous moon, staring over and down in the direction of the phosphorescent streaks.

"I believe you are right, Captain," he confided, sliding down again. "There are also other fish about, many of them, and I think this is a very fair school. Hail the shore, if you will, for another skiff, while I overhaul my seine!"

Jean ran forward to where his mackerel seine was folded in a big basket beside the basket that held his lobsters and began to replace it anew, straightening out any tangles, slipping the lines through his hands and seeing that leads and floats were in their proper positions.

"Ahoy, the beach, there!" Taylor called through his trumpeted hands to the nearest fish-stage. "Ahoy, there! Mackerel school!"

It was a magic word, for the mackerel was one of the most valuable fish the Islanders handled and one they greatly loved to take, whether by day with jig and clam for bait or by night with the sweeping seine. In instantaneous response to his hail another skiff shot out from the stage to join that of Jean Louis.

"Hello, Napoleon Claire!" greeted Jean joyously. "I would not want a better boat handler. Ha, Napoleon, you may thank us for lining your pockets if we have guessed right! Here is your end of the seine to drag!"

Jean dropped one end overboard for Napoleon to pick up, and the moment Napoleon grasped the head line floating by, Jean himself ran down his sail.

Taylor took the oars to scull and with Napoleon creeping up behind, ready to act as a pivot on which they might swing, he drove the boat in a flattened arc about the spot where the school had broken surface in pursuit of the smaller fry that formed their prey.

Other denizens of the deep were darting all about them, skimming the top like a moving shoal of diamonds or fluking far down like fire-gilded fish in the nether-world River Styx.

A small school of herring shot by, pursued by a great flat skate, ugly as a demon. A voracious dogfish finned in zigzag rushes in the rear. Another school, this time of capelin, glowed the bay with opal light that scattered and pooled like iridescent oil and went suddenly dark as several huge fifty-pound cod launched into them liked greased vessels into a harbor slip.

War of the sea there was in the Magdalens as well as war of the land, the same bitter conflict, the incessant preying, the eternal clash and survival!

"There they are, Walter—oh, look!" warned Madeline as the school broke again a few fathoms ahead and to port of them.

"Yes, but hurry!" exhorted Jean Louis breathlessly. "Ah, hurry, Captain Taylor, or they may sound and be gone!"

With a few swift, powerful strokes Taylor headed the school and swung about to pen them in the shallows. Working frantically, Jean Louis paid out the seine as they circled, and once they were well around their arc, Napoleon Claire rowed rapidly to meet them, decreasing the size of the enclosed water space as he came.

The ends of the seine met, the cork floats on the head-line circling the surface, the leaden sinkers on the foot line ringing to the bottom, the mackerel school dashing madly about in a cylinder of twine.

"Foot ropes—haul!" shrieked the prancing Jean Louis.

He pulled. Napoleon Claire pulled. Taylor dropped his oars to help, and Madeline herself grasped the foot ropes with her strong, slim, white fingers. The ropes they brought in hand over hand drew up the foot lines, pursing the seine so that the trapped fish were bagged in a bag that tightened every moment.

Like a boiling pot it simmered, while Jean Louis looped a length of the net he had used for his lobster bait bags about an iron hoop and dipped the leaping mackerel out with the improvised dip net. Quivering, kicking, they came up and into the boat bottoms, their bellies glimmering silver, their striped backs glinting blue as gun-barrels in the moonlight, splendid beauties, five pounds and more in weight, worth a full half-dollar apiece!

Other prizes of other varieties not so valuable Jean found too, taken unawares in the trap, and at the last he stirred a sulking monster from the bottom of the bag.

"A dogfish!" he shouted. "Look out! Look out, or he will spoil my net!"

Taylor jumped, but before he could brain it with an oar, the shifty member of the shark family darted like a torpedo against the side of the seine, ripping and writhing savagely and was gone.

Digitized by Google

A big hole gaped in the seine.

Jean Louis surveyed it ruefully, making a mental estimate of the damage done. Then he tossed his head lightly as his glance switched to his own boat-bottom and to that of Napoleon Claire, each bottom covered with the precious mackerel.

"Ha, but never mind!" he exulted. "The hole will mend, and here is enough money to pay my rent at twenty-five cents an acre —*oui*, or to buy it outright at four dollars!"

"You see, Jean," laughed Madeline, "that is what you got by heeding me and running past Etang du Nord when I told you to do so!"

"Yes, Jean—the Fisher's Gold!" supplemented Taylor. "It is always a woman who brings it!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE CALL OF THE MAINLAND

THOSE were lazy Summer days on the lazy Summer deep, days of matchless color and light for Madeline and Taylor, days that were heralded and ended by sunrises and sunsets beautiful beyond compare, violent sunrises that broke from the Gulf like the blare of emblazoned trumpets and sunsets equally violent going down on the heaving horizon like the clash of brazen cymbals. Many hours they spent with Jean Louis when he could spare the time from Boucher's little farm, hours with the lusty fifty-pound cod, with the pretty striped mackerel lured to the mackerel jigs by fresh clams dug from the shoals when the tide was out.

The harvest of the sea was fairly begun, herring, cod, lobster, mackerel and fish of lesser value were brought in daily, and while the fleets went out the canneries and packing houses hummed ashore and the women tended and turned the slab-like cod on the flakes.

But there swiftly came a day, and all too swiftly for Taylor, when the magic wire writhing undersea to the distant mainland was alive again, and the sixteen telegraph stations dotted here and there about the islands of the Magdalen Group stood ready to take or send a message once more. In the Amherst office Boucher bent over the clicking key with Taylor leaning anxiously on the table beside him for word of the Pictou boat expected there within twenty-four hours.

"She sailed before dawn this morning," translated Boucher as the key fell silent. "She will be here before night."

Taylor said nothing, staring at the potent instrument that had lain unable to call the world so long but which now in a moment summoned that world back for him, and when he looked up Boucher held out his hand.

"Captain Taylor, I am glad—and at the same time sorry," he spoke frankly. "You know. The Islands grow on one. I must confess that they are an inseparable part of my own life now and that the telegraph is woven into my nervous system. *Oui*, it grows. There is no denying. That is why I am so very sorry for you."

Taylor searched Boucher's face as he gripped the hand extended to him.

"Then the caution you gave me the first night I came here still holds good?" he asked hesitatingly.

"Yes," nodded Boucher, laying his other hand sympathetically upon Taylor's shoulder. "It still holds good. My boy, I am sorry, but it can not be otherwise."

The fresh clicking of the key made him turn to it again in haste, and Taylor, after lingering and vacillating and seeing that Boucher was busy communicating with the other Island stations, passed out and down to where he had left Madeline on the beach.

It was low tide, and upon the uncovered foreshore men, women, girls and boys, the men and women in rubber boots, the girls and boys for the most part in bare feet with skirts and pantaloons girded high, were wandering along the wave line digging clams for mackerel bait with three-pronged forks. A great wind was blowing from the northeast, dead offshore. It was too rough for any of the skiffs or schooners to put outside to fish, so the fishermen were employing the leisure hours in gathering bait for the morrow which might break calm.

At the sound of Taylor's boots in the sand Madeline turned about from her chattering to the bare-legged, kirtled maidens who looked like rosy goddesses of the sea with dripping tridents in hand.

"Again and again you are the Goddess of the Gulf who is the good angel of deserving sea captains, the queen of all these other goddesses," he bantered with a show of lightness that failed to deceive her.

Digitized by Google

"You have news," she told him pointedly as she read his eyes. "My father must have got a message. Is it about the Pictoy steamer?"

"Yes, Madeline," he confessed, "and it'll be here before night."

His glance avoided hers, straying aimlessly out over Pleasant Bay to the open waters beyond. From those waters, as if the sullen floes had seen in the *Montcalm* an ally of Summer not to be defeated, the ice, honeycombed by the ever-increasing warmth of the sun, had retreated day by day till the fleets of the fishermen fully reclaimed the offshore cruising grounds that Winger and the Caliban storm-god had usurped so long. Taylor glanced aimlessly, but his glance suddenly fixed with a start upon the billow-scalloped skyline.

"What is it?" demanded Madeline, catching his start and wheeling to stare with him. "Not the boat already?"

"No, schooners, a big fleet making for shelter here!" he exclaimed. "Gloucester boats, too—some of them!"

"Your home boats?" she asked excitedly.

"Yes and others," supplemented Taylor. "Maybe, Madeline, there'll be men among them whom I know."

Eagerly they watched the oncoming fleet of schooners driving from the fury of the storm-god whose power would overwhelm them outside.

CHAPTER XXII

SALVAGE OF THE STORM

IT WAS a motley fleet of vessels they gazed on, vessels new and old, rigged with ancient patched canvas and graced with shining new cloth, old type schooners lumbering clumsily beside the trim, yacht-like modern boats.

Taylor could see many with the old double headsails, pulling like balloons in the gale. He saw fore and mains reefed like a host of folded flags and topsails come down like floating handkerchiefs. White local sails, dark alien sails shifted and changed places. Pole-masted schooners seemed always surging to the fore, riding gracefully, while the older type crashed the seas behind at every jump with the swinging outboard of their main booms and plunged their bowsprits under to the knightheads.

Swiftly they soared and sank, flying from the storm wrath, the storm light red on their sails, beating like a flock of sea birds past the shifting sand-dunes of Alright Island, past Cape Alright, past House Harbor in the cove, past the spray-smoked cliffs of Entry Island till they winnowed down over the sky-ramping billows like a flock of tired terns upon the sheltered surface of Pleasant Bay.

Within range of a naked sea eye, Taylor gazed amazed upon the fleet of vessels he had left in the Bay of Islands on Newfoundland.

"It's the home fleet, all right, Madeline," he shouted aloud in his gladness. "Yonder's Grant's *Evening Star* and the *Mary Bedford* and the *Pride of Haarlem* and the rest. Grant has my men on the *Evening Star*. You remember my telling you? Come on, little girl, come on. I must board him and see how they've made out, and I want Grant to see you. Here's Jean Louis's skiff handy, so we'll borrow it for a minute."

He shoved the boat clear and helped Madeline in, laughing at her bare feet in the boat bottom, and rowed out to the *Evening Star*.

Grant, standing by the rail, caught sight of them and with a mighty roar brought his fist down upon his rail.

"By all the ocean gods!" he exploded. "You—Walter? How in thunder did you come to sneak in here? Oh!—Ah!—Ha! Ha! I beg your pardon, Walter. Now I see your passenger, I take that back."

"Don't be an ass, Grant!" grinned Taylor, the red blood flushing the bronze of his cheek. "Miss Boucher, let me introduce Captain Grant. Grant, Miss Boucher is the daughter of M. le Boucher head of the Island Telegraph Service, you must know. She has sheltered me as a shipwrecked waif."

They were alongside, and the next moment he was introducing all round and shaking hands over the rail with Grant, Grant's men and all his own men who had been fishing with the *Evening Star* on shares, explaining things to them.

"What about yourself, Grant?" he demanded laughingly amid the general babel. "Had a poor catch, eh?"

"Less than half," informed Grant. "Thought we'd fill up here on the way home and carry them in salt like the rest. Took us all our time to tack in though. There's certainly one whale of a gale blowing. We

Digitized by Google

hung off too long, you see, to make the protected harbor of Grand Entry. Expecting a shift, Walt—by Jove, there it is!"

Grant wheeled, cocking his head aloft.

"There it is, Walt. My stars, when we don't want it. Look out for your skiff, there. Look out, I say, for the skiff and Miss Boucher!"

Shouting orders to his men, Grant jumped for the wheel. The sudden heeling of the *Evening Star* before he got to it smashed one of Taylor's oars between the gunwales of the skiff and schooner. Even as he went clear with a shove of the remaining oar, he felt the force of the changed blast in his face.

In a flash, and absolutely without warning, the wind had drawn several points, veering with the flip of a weathervane from northeast to east. One moment it was pouring off shore with the pressure of an immense hydraulic nozzle. The next moment the nozzle was turned on shore carrying the fleet before it like so much cork.

In the skiff that spun like a toy boat toward the beach Taylor sat tilted far back against the wind's tremendous breath, this feet braced on the boat ribs, one hand clutching Madeline lest she be blown overboard, the other steering with the remaining oar so as to keep the skiff bow on to the sands. Caught by the demon of storm in the moment of fancied security, the schooners spun shoreward like Taylor's skiff, the *Evening Star* barely clearing her while she went by and fouling the *Pride of Haarlem* in her passage.

Awestruck, Taylor and Madeline gazed for a fleeting instant upon the hundreds of trapped ships, all dragging, fouling, the old head-sail-rigged schooners ripping out the pole masts of the others with their ponderous swinging booms and bowsprits. Their impression was one of a forest of bending and breaking masts, of a gale-bleached sky flagged with torn sails, checkered with flying ropes, of foam and welter, of crashing aerial death aloft and spuming tidal death below.

It was a sight uncanny, incredible, and the sight of the beaching more incredible still, yet what their eyes saw in those swift seconds Taylor knew no man might ever dispute, for it was written on the brains of others besides themselves, on the brains of Boucher, Jean Louis, Jacques Beauport, suddenly drawn from nowhere by the imminence of disaster—on the brains of these and many others whom they glimpsed dashing along the wave-line of the foreshore pulling petrified women and children out of the way before the doomed vessels reared over them.

With the shock of an earthquake the armada of hulls cannonaded on the beach driving on so thickly that they ground and stove and fouled each other in amazing tangles. Some drove and rebounded, overturned into the backwash that reeled them out on the reefs and bars, and thus Taylor saw Grant's *Evening Star*, her masts whipping the surface, her bottom bellying skyward, go drifting out with the jolly joking Grant, his crew and Taylor's crew of the lost *Lady Fair*. All in one breath they went and Taylor groaned like a man who has been knifed. Mechanically he counted the skeletons of ships on the beach ahead, a full fifty littering a four-hundred-yard strip of sand with the backwash still tugging with white teeth at a rolling few.

Decks up and tough masts still standing, keels up or heeled on their quarters, they lay jammed into the ooze and muck. One Taylor noted buried pile-like, nose first, and her stern in the air, and another his incredulous eyes followed as combined wind and surge hurled it high across the foreshore, over the spread of drying nets, over the cod flakes straddling like rows of big camp cots, sheer over into a many-angled farm plot beyond!

Then his eyes lost it as the skiff itself plunged on the shore between two wedged hulls and he and Madeline were thrown violently in the sand.

His arms were round her, arms and body protecting her from shock, but in spite of that the impact tore her body loose, bruising it roughly so that as Taylor floundered to his knees, she lay all white and still. With a cry of fear he stumbled to her and gathered her again in his arms.

"Oh, Madeline, Madeline, have I killed you with my thoughtlessness?" he demanded frantically. "Madeline, speak to me. Ah! my Goddess of the Gulf, my goddess alone!"

For she stirred from the brutal shock at the sound of his entreating voice, and her wonderful Mediterranean blue eyes smiled out of her pallid face into his. The walls of the schooners' hulls hid them from the view of any one on the beach, and Taylor,

Digitized by Google

all restraint and caution forgotten pressed her close to him.

"Dear God," he breathed. "If I had killed you! I shouldn't have risked taking you out on the bay in that great wind!"

"Ah, but you should, Walter!" she smiled, the color creeping through her pallor. "You should for—for this!"

As their lips met, Boucher and Jacques Beauport, searching the wrecks for them, stepped without announcement round the wall of the schooner's hull.

Boucher's hands flew heavenward in consternation at the sight.

Beauport leaped forward as if to drag Madeline away from Taylor.

"Don't you put a hand on either of us!" snarled the Gloucester man.

His arm doubled back, his fist poising to drive like a battering ram into the Breton's face, and Jacques suddenly recoiled, his face dark with rage.

"But you have no right, no right whatever," he spluttered wrathfully. "I say you have no right to take her out yonder in such a gale."

"I have the right to take her anywhere," flashed Taylor grimly. "Ask her. Ask Boucher. I think he won't deny me the right—now."

CHAPTER XXIII

FLOTSAM FROM THE *HORNET*

WITH one accord the eyes of the three turned on Boucher.

Boucher brought his hands down with a sweep that was eloquent of utter helplessness.

"*Dieu, Dieu*, must I tell you, then?" he cried out.

Taylor stared at him, astounded, unable to interpret his attitude, and Boucher took a swift glance about to assure himself that no one else was near enough to overhear his words.

Then he bent forward, his head close to the heads of the other three.

"I know your father's story, Captain Taylor," he spoke rapidly, "and you will know Madeline's father's story when you hear his name. Jacques Beauport here knows, but except by him it has never been spoken in these islands since I came. No, no, I am not a native Acadian as you thought. My name is not Boucher, you understand. It is Pellier!"

"Admiral Pellier?" gasped Taylor, stiffening.

"*Oui*," nodded Boucher, with a surge of patent bitterness that veritably rimed his lips, "Admiral Pellier that once commanded the *Groix* in the Fishery Protection Service on Newfoundland, my boy!"

Taylor stared speechless, for into his dazed mind rushed the memory of his father's romance. He saw with mental vision the bay of Chateau on the bleak Labrador and the house in which his mother, Marie Laval, had lived when so many bold, adventurous suitors came seeking her hand, Marie the slim offshoot of the exiled Acadians and the flower of the coast. He could feel the thrill of that old romance stir his veins as he visioned it, his mother Marie luring a score of suitors among whom the two men before him and his dead father were chief.

He saw his father wander the Labrador shores with her, perhaps as he had wandered the Magdalen shores with Madeline, pleading his love against parental obduracy. He saw her stand at the last, and against her will, before the altar with Pellier. He experienced his father's dark brooding and the verve of his oath to take her back, and the swift incidents of that taking back, flew in pageant before his eyes; the seizing of the *Graywing*, the spiriting away of the *Esperance* and its wild drive through a cordon of pursuers!

Boucher's words were stark, but in them was a world of meaning, the epitome of thirty years of yearning and exile in the Magdalens.

"You see," Boucher went on tremulously, breaking in on Taylor's vision, "I could not stand it when the word came that the case against the *Graywing* was dropped. I bear you no ill will, my boy. I liked you from the first moment of your landing on Amherst Island, and that was why I gave you a warning that was of no use. You have seen that I liked you? Perhaps it was because you are molded in your mother's image! Perhaps it was because of yourself! Who knows? But with your father and myself it was different. It was man against man in a struggle for all that is of worth to a man in this world. So I applied for leave to go down to your United States and take back my own."

"And the higher naval authorities would not give it?" ventured Taylor breathlessly.

Digitized by Google

Boucher shook his head.

"No, they would not give it, and it made me bitter at the time, though I saw the reason of it later. They did not want any friction, did not want the case to assume the proportions of an international difference. The *Graywing* was confiscated, and there the matter rested. What mattered a man's personal affairs? They did not enter into diplomatic relations or good will. Ha, I was wild and hot and bitter at the time, I say, and I swore if they would not give me leave I would take leave!"

Boucher paused, his respiration coming quickly, his brown eyes filmed with memories turning from Madeline to Taylor, to Jacques Beauport and back again.

"I kept my oath," he nodded finally. "There is no telling what a man will do when the devil of unrest spurs him! I deserted from the *Groix*, from the rank of Admiral, and you know all that that step means and the penalty therefor! From Chateau I got another big schooner, the *Hornet*, and a crew of ten trusted men. As Marie, my Marie—your mother, Captain Taylor—had gone south on a schooner's deck, so would she come north again, on the deck of the *Hornet!* That was the plan, but the wind and sea took a hand. It was the month of November, and as wild a storm leaped up as ever I saw in the Gulf.

"In the dead of night the *Hornet* was blown off her course in the blinding snowstorm that raged, and in spite of all we could do was driven on yonder North Beach even as these schooners were driven here at our feet this moment. That is a scene that will not fade from my mind—the roaring blizzard, the terrible seas, the frozen floes battering the cliffs as we drifted helplessly in. *Voilà*, the *Hornet* was so much paper in the sop of the elements. She was gone in a breath, my ten men gone with her, and I alone was cast upon the floes at the mercy of the frosts and snows without so much as a blanket in my possession!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE HAND OF JACQUES BEAUPORT

BOUCHER paused, living that moment again, and as they gazed on him the other three seemed to live it with him.

For, vivid in their minds was the memory of the night they had all but perished amid the grinding floes on the same grim North Beach. In their consciousness rose the picture of themselves hauling the boats of the *Blavet* across from Byron Island to Grosse Island and the treacherous gale smashing the path of their feet to atoms and hurling them afloat in their puny craft.

A grim picture of one of the grimmest, deadliest beaches of all the beaches of the Seven Seas!

"My Heavens, father, my Heavens!" breathed Madeline tensely.

"True!" he returned. "And it is a miracle I am here to tell you the tale. For many days, the better part of a week, so long that I began to rave and lose all track of time, I wandered on the ice trying to make my way to the land of the North Beach, satisfying my hunger and thirst with snow and ice. At last I succeeded and collapsed with cold and weakness, but some of the island fishermen had sighted me and come to my aid. *Dieu*, I was a patient of patients then, and not a doctor in the Islands! My tongue swollen with snow-eating, frost-bitten everywhere, half-starved, half-mad with thirst and raving like a maniac! *Tiens*, there was your fine Admiral of the *Groix—oui*, the dented plaything of the Gulf!"

"Yet you survived in spite of all!" exclaimed Taylor in admiration.

"*Oui*, as you see, but I think it was the devil of unrest, the fires of hell within me that fought the battle, not myself, my physical self, I mean! I was young, you see, and through thirty years I have tamed the fires and the unrest. The imprisonment of the lonely Magdalens has done it. My landing was in November, the end of the month, and the *Hornet* was lost. It was in the first week of December that the fishermen found me. The regular vessels of the Gulf had made their last run and, even as you, Captain Taylor, I was isolated here.

"I could not leave till Summer at the earliest, and when Summer came I did not want to leave. For I first managed to communicate with Jacques Beauport, here, who had also taken French leave of the *Groix* at my bribe and who had taken charge of my little Madeline at Chateau till I could work out my plan. But the reply Jacques sent me changed the course of everything. My Marie had married again, and the vessels of the French Navy on the Fishery

Digitized by Google

Protection Service were scouring the coasts for the deserting Admiral Pellier.

"Jacques was of low rank, and they did not spend money over him. An admiral was different, and I had active enemies at home. Well, what need to say more? The Magdalen Islands would be the last place in the wide world they would look for me, a haven of havens for a despairing, hunted man. *Voilà*, you have it all. I entered the Telegraph Service and stayed on till the way was clear for Jacques to come and bring with him my little Madeline from Chateau!"

"My God, what suffering and suspense and heartache, father!" cried Madeline.

She loosed her arms from Taylor's grip and flung them impulsively round Boucher's neck.

"My father," she faltered, tears in her wonderful blue eyes, "and you never let me know of anything, never breathed a word of this to me! You let me believe I was born here and that my mother died when I was born!"

"*Oui*, you were only a toddler and could not remember, you see."

"But bearing it all yourself! Why did you not let me share it with you?"

"What need?" quavered Boucher, the tears of old sadness and despair springing to his own brown eyes. "What gain, my little Madeline? Why should I make you unhappy with buried sorrows and darken your young life with the clouds of my own?"

"But wait—wait a minute!" stammered Taylor, his brain reeling from surprise and his bruised frame a-tremble with inward qualms as the emotion of father and daughter brought the truth flashing to the forefront through his own mingled feelings. "There's something wrong here, some mistake. You say she is your flesh-and-blood daughter? Not a foster-daughter? You say she is the real Madeline Pellier?"

"*Certainement*," gloated Beauport, breaking in, "she is no other. Madeline Pellier, of your own blood, your very half-sister, and no wife of yours if you live one thousand years!"

"You hound!" snarled Taylor. "You're not the only one who knows Chateau. I tell you there's some mistake. She can't be Madeline Pellier. Madeline Pellier is dead. She died when a little child, for I have stood by her grave and read her name more than once in the ruined graveyard at Chateau!"

"You lie!" shrieked Jacques vehemently. "You perjure yourself!"

In the Breton's rage and hate Taylor thought he detected a dawning whimper of fear, but it was only the rage and hate that his hot blood challenged. He leaped instantly, his hands at Beauport's throat, pinning him against the curve of the schooner's hull.

"I don't lie, Beauport!" he gritted. "I don't perjure myself. Besides, marked graves don't lie, and there never was but one Madeline Pellier on the Labrador. You lie, Jacques. You perjure yourself. There's underhand work in this somewhere, and you've done it unknown to Boucher—to—Admiral Pellier. By heavens, out with it! Isn't she some one else?"

Taylor's powerful hands throttled like steel bands round Beauport's throat.

Jacques grew red and purple and all but choked as he struggled.

"Isn't she?" demanded the Gloucester man implacably.

Beauport gurgled and convulsively nodded his head, his veins black with constriction.

"And her name?" demanded Taylor, easing his grip a little to let breath into the Breton's windpipe.

"*Oui*, her name?" echoed Boucher, glaring over the Gloucester man's shoulder at the pinned Beauport.

Beauport's nod had been like a red-hot goad to Boucher, for like a flash he had sprung and plucked out the long knife that Jacques wore under his casque. The steel poised within an inch of the Breton's eyes.

"Her name, you *canaille*, you dog of a kidnapper!" he menaced. "Her name and what happened to my little Madeline or you will be Jacques the Blind!"

"I had no hand in it," cringed the purple Jacques. "Your little Madeline was dead of fever before I got your word to come. *Comment?* I did it in good faith, in a kindness if you will listen. You had suffered. I had not the heart to bring you the news of the little Madeline's death on top of all. So I brought another in her place. They were of an age and similarity, and toddlers change so that I knew you would never know unless you went to Chateau, and I had no fear of that with the Navy looking for you. Madeline is she—she that was the waif of Andrew Lisand lost on the *Cormorant* in the Strait of Belle Isle!"

Digitized by Google

"Madeline Lisand!" breathed Taylor, stepping back. "Thank God, Madeline, thank the good God of sailormen!"

While the clamorous rush of the salvagers overruning the wrecks ebbed and flowed about their screened corner, the four stood staring silently at each other, a thousand mingled emotions sparkling from eye to eye, till in a deep, throaty blast the purl of a steamer's siren broke their silence.

Simultaneously they turned, their separate glances switching seaward.

"The Pictou boat!" gasped Madeline.

"*Oui*, and something else," leered Beauport, fingering his bruised throat and pointing to another dark hull just off Red Cape. "*Capitaine* Taylor is not the lord of all things yet. See? The French cruiser *Titan*!"

"Ah, you spiteful devil, Jacques!" flashed Madeline intuitively. "You sent for it. That was why you boarded the ice-breaker *Montcalm* that day—to have her captain send a cable for you from the mainland!"

"And why should I not?" growled Beauport maliciously. "He will face the law."

With a rush Taylor leaped at Jacques again, but Madeline caught his arm and whispered in his ear.

"Not that, Walter," she decided, quick of wit. "We must get away, you and I. Come, we must run for Jean Louis's charette —quick!"

Even as she pulled Taylor away, she turned about with a surge of tenderness and drew down her father's face between her palms.

"But I am your little Madeline still," she whispered to him. "And I will come back. We both will come back. For listen: We will board the Pictou steamer at the port of Grand Entry on Coffin Island. That will be after its call here, and neither Jacques nor the commander of the *Titan* will know. I can not let them take him back to St. John's now, can not let him out of my sight for fear of what that crazed Jacques might do. Before morning we shall be on the mainland, but oh, my father in spite of all, we will come back to you when things blow clear!"

She kissed him passionately in the depths of his brown beard before she let him push her away with Taylor.

"Yes, yes, my little Madeline," he faltered "And if they should happen to catch you, I will not let them part you two without some trouble. I am magistrate here under the Province of Quebec, and if they call on me to arrest him I will not hand him over. I will make them fight for extradition. Go, and meanwhile I will promise that Beauport does not trail you. *Oui*, and if he opens his lips about me, he will never trail any one any more. Hurry, before the *Titan* gets into the bay!"

CHAPTER XXV

FLIGHT

LOOKING back as they ran, Madeline and Taylor saw a strange sight, a magistrate taking the law into his own hands. With the Breton's own knife Boucher stood in the base of the angle between the schooner hulls, penning him there while the Pictou mail boat and the Service cruiser steamed in through heavy breaking seas toward the wreck-strewn foreshore of Pleasant Bay.

"Jean Louis!" cried Madeline frantically. "Where is he? Ah, yonder he is with the salvagers! Jean, Jean, for the love of Heaven, hurry!"

Jean Louis, stepping from deck to deck of the beached schooners, so close they lay together, turned from his search of the wreckage at her startling cry and took two or three long jumps toward them.

"What is it?" he demanded anxiously. "Are you hurt? Are either of you hurt?"

"No, no, the charette! Have you it here on the beach anywhere?"

"No, it is at home," Jean informed. "I was using the boat, you see. Beast and cart are in the yard at the barn."

"Then run!" she exhorted. "It is a bitter thing to leave like this without a word of pity for these men of the fleets, but it has to be, Jean, and there are lots of salvagers without you. Run like the wind and get your charette ready for us. Walter and I will be at your heels. Look, Jean—you understand? The *Titan*! We must be away before it gets in to the beach."

In her frenzy Madeline shook Jean Louis till his gaunt frame rattled, but Jean was not by any means slow of wit.

He stared a second at the smoking *Titan* and another second at the ruffled two before him.

"*Oui*, I understand," he burst out. "So that is it, eh? Then they will not catch

Digitized by Google

your Captain Taylor unless they first catch my beast, and that I swear they cannot do once he has his heels well clicking. Have no fear, Mademoiselle Madeline, I will get him harnessed for you!"

He was off running as he spoke, like an animated scarecrow, his sealskin galoshes and banded pantaloons flapping wildly in his immense strides. Run as they might, he easily out-distanced Madeline and Taylor, tearing up the hill, past the new house and into the yard at the barn.

Amazed at his antics, his household streamed forth to see, the stout Madame waddling hurriedly in his wake and the twins, Philip and Bonaparte, their solemnity thrown to the winds, shrieking in glee as they pelted after in the hope of some excitement.

When Madeline and Taylor rushed up, Jean Louis was backing his beast into the shafts of the charette, tracing up and answering Madame's volleyed questions all in a single second.

"*Voilà*, here they are puffing, to see for your incredulous self!" he exclaimed. "All ready for you as I promised, *mes enfants!* In with you."

Half laughing, half crying in her excitement, Madeline seized Madame Louis by her fat cheeks, explaining to her in incoherent words what it all meant, kissing her and the twins good-by and promising wildly to come back on a vague day. Then she wheeled to the waiting cart.

"The harness, Walter—see that it's all sound for the hills!" she cautioned as she went to get in. "And the whip! Jean Louis, you've forgotten the whip. Throw it in. Ah, but we must make time!"

She sprang with that supple run and sway of her limbs into the two-wheeled cart. While Jean Louis darted into the new barn and brought out the whip, Taylor, running a hasty hand over the shaggy horse's harness, assured himself that every buckle was well fastened, and whip in hand, leaped up beside her with a shout of good-by to the faithful Jean.

With a spin and shower of wet sand from the wheels they were off to shouted good-bys, whirling along the road that led to Grindstone Island at a breakneck speed. Uphill they never slackened. Downhill they plunged and galloped, winding by the rim of the Island on the very edge of the sea.

There was need for haste. Amherst Island itself ran over ten miles long, and beyond it the other islands of the Main Group were strung out to a length of over fifty miles. The gale had blown itself out with the shift of the wind, and the wind itself was falling to a mere sailing breeze, but a tremendous sea was running and they knew that the Pictou steamer would not linger long where even two of the three Government wharves on the Islands would not be able to afford safe anchorage and the rest of the calls would have to be made by standing offshore and ferrying with the fishermen's boats.

Only at Grand Entry on Coffin Island were they certain of boarding her and to board her they must be there as soon as she. For Grand Entry was the solitary protected harbor on the coasts, and though storms and swell might seep the shallow entrance and bare its very sands, a vessel inside could rest secure while she did her loading and unloading.

Then, too, the tide would soon be on the turn, and once it commenced to rise the precarious sand bars connecting the string of Islands could not be crossed at all!

So Taylor lashed his sturdy Island beast along, dropping the sunset behind in a sky of hammered brass and raising the virgin moon out of her quicksilver bath ahead.

Continually they passed small schooners putting out over the great swell through the aftermath of the storm to see what damage had been done to their near-by nets. They passed, also, berry pickers in sunbonnets and calico dresses homing with full pails, the Island farmers with loads of fragrant meadow hay or golden pyramids of the first early wheat sheaves.

These stared in wonder at the recklessness and haste of the rolling charette as it shot by, but Taylor offered no hail that perchance might give Jacques Beauport and the *Titan's* men a clue if they should be trying to trace them.

He lashed grimly on and on along the strange sea road, the road the like of which was not to be found anywhere else in the world, with the smell of the kelp coming up to them on the night breeze, the long, fronded sea grasses and waving mosses catching and tangling in their whirring wheels as they spun by and the sleek, rolling surges breaking beside and splashing the horses's legs so that he stamped the salt spray in their faces as he galloped.

Digitized by Google

Of wonderful speed for all his unkempt appearance, of remarkable soundness of wind, endowed with the same tireless endurance as the Shetland but bigger framed, the charette horse scarcely slackened unless Taylor pulled him up and breathed him a minute or two upon the steeps.

Their furious driving had carried them to Grindstone, and they pressed on without pause lest the tide should mask the treacherous quicksands between Grindstone and Wolf and Wolf and Grosse.

Taylor had no knowledge of the route through the quicksands but Madeline had driven them all her life and at her direction he wound about the treacherous traps, wheeling flat on old ocean's bottom over carpets of vivid sea mosses and ferns, over beds of beautiful shells and multicolored sea anemones, by pools filled with brilliant fish, marine worms and crawling lobsters and crabs.

In spite of their haste the tide was creeping in, and on some bars between Grindstone and Wolf the water in places reached over the horse's fetlocks and came half-way up to the hubs of the cart.

"Hurry, Walter, hurry!" Madeline urged. "Drive faster or the tide may cut us off before we reach Coffin Island!"

Taylor shook out his horse and plied the whip again. Over the back of snarling Wolf they drove, keeping to the main ridge of lava geysered up from the bottom of the sea in the azoic ages and covered through the long centuries by the ever-swirling sands of the sea. Reefs and outer isles, surface rocks and bars slid past.

Shrouded in the moonlight out yonder floated fearsome Deadman as it had floated since the beginning of time, the never-salvaged body, the murdered rock giant over twenty-four hundred feet long lying on his back on the wave. On his scappled head, his ribbed chest, his bony toes the walrus used to haul out in thousands in the days of the Biscayans, but now nothing clothed his naked body but the shroud of the moonbeams and the débris of doomed ships.

Involuntarily Madeline shuddered as they pressed along. Through all the points of the compass they had twisted and turned in their winding flight. Like a string of sausages the Islands looped about, as if thrown down at haphazard. Amherst Island had carried them nearly due east. Grindstone Island and Wolf Island swung them to the north. Now Grosse Island curved them eastward, and East Island led them down on Coffin to the south.

Named after the sea captain to whom the crown grant of the Magdalens had been given and graced by the protected harbor of Grand Entry, it was the last of the connected Main Group, and on its steep cliffs Taylor pulled up his heaving horse and consulted his watch.

"Ten o'clock, Madeline!" he announced. "Though the moon is as bright as day! The steamer ought to be here soon. She should make Grand Entry by water as quickly as we did by land. By Jove, yes—look, there are her lights coming in!"

"And other lights, too!" exclaimed Madeline in dismay as she stared out over the jeweled harbor toward its shallow entrance. "It's the cruiser *Titan*. They've guessed our move. Quick, Walter, back before they see us against the sky-line!"

With a growl of chagrin Taylor wheeled the charette and raced back the way they had come.

"I wonder if they saw?" he kept reiterating as he drove at top speed. "I wonder if they did? If they didn't, we've a boarding chance yet!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE END OF THE CHASE

ON THE tide-washed bars between Coffin and East Islands the horse suddenly shied and stopped as the air overhead was ripped with a tearing sound.

A huge spout of sand and spray shot up on the narrow road in front. Then the report reached their ears, the bellowing, quaking shock of a cruiser's four-inch gun.

Taylor and Madeline wheeled on their seats and stared. Close in to the shoals they glimpsed the *Titan* with two figures on her bridge, one strange figure in uniform, the other the familiar figure of Jacques Beauport silhouetted against the silvery sky in his loose casque.

"They saw!" cried Madeline. "They saw us on the Coffin cliffs!"

While she spoke another shell burst ahead, and Taylor srpang up in the charette with a cry of rage.

"The dogs! The devils!" he anathematized. "To shell us, to shell a woman! They know you're here."

Digitized by Google

Madeline pointed to the bar with the tide lapping over it.

"It's not us but the road they're shelling, Walter," she corrected.

Another mud mushroom rose up and crumbled, and the purpose of the shelling suddenly broke upon Taylor's mind. It was beautiful gunnery practise and at the same time a piece of diabolical ingenuity, the four-inch gun quake-quaking and the shells falling every minute on the narrow path between the quicksands, holding them back while the swirling tide came up foot by foot.

"When it's so deep that we can't cross they'll send a boat ashore and take us!" Madeline prophesied bitterly.

"But they can't do anything so high-handed as that!" protested Taylor. "They're on the Newfoundland Service and the Magdalens are under the jurisdiction of Quebec. They can't take me here without first setting the law in motion through your father."

"They'll take you first and set the law in motion afterward," transposed Madeline. "That is the way with Jacques Beauport."

"By Heavens, then they'll not take me at all!" gritted Taylor. "We'll try Byron, Madeline. Maybe there's a chance. You think the boat will call there?"

"Oh, yes, and at the Bird Rocks! It goes to the light only once a month, and this is the first trip, you see. It will have to land supplies for Kellan on Byron and Cormier the keeper of the light."

"Then we'll try for her off the Main Group!" decided Taylor swiftly. "It's our only chance. The swell's heavy. I don't want you to risk it if you're afraid, though. Are you afraid to dare it, Madeline?"

"I'll dare anything with you, Walter. Go on. What are you going to do with the charette?"

"Back it out of this!"

Feverishly he leaped down and helped Madeline out on solid footing. Backing the cart till he could turn and swing it up to higher ground out of reach of the in-coming tide, Taylor unhitched the horse and freed it to crop the coarse grass that crowned the sand-dunes. There they left it where Jean Louis would find it when he came looking and dived into the obscurity of the dunes themselves across to the opposite shore of the island. Straight for a little enclosed, lagoon-like cove where they knew the fishermen were accustomed to leave their boats riding at anchor ready to flit out in the gray of the dawn they ran, losing the cruiser behind the shoulders of the dunes and cliffs.

At once the firing from the *Titan* stopped. They did not know whether a boat was being lowered or not, but they dared not pause to listen. Not only must they be out of the cove but out of sight along the steep shores before any man from the cruiser should cross the island.

Taylor seized Madeline's hand, pulling her along at a rapid rate, down the slopes of the sand dunes and out upon the decks of the nearest skiffs, sloops and schooners riding so thickly that they could step from gunwale to gunwale. He chose a large sloop for its superior drawing power, now that the wind had lost most of its brutal force, and ran up the great mainsail.

There was rise enough in the tide to squeeze over the bar at the entrance of the cove, and once over, Taylor hugged the concealing shores of East Island till he could square away for Byron without being detected by possible sentinels.

It was a brave sailor's breeze that drove them swiftly over the undulating water hills to Byron, and no light or blot upon the moon-pearled deep behind could be discerned by the watching Madeline, nothing at all but the wide phalanxes of the rollers driving on their needless crusade under the starred banner of Heaven. Not till they ran under Byron's sullen cliffs and luffed up off Kellan's stages where by the light of the moon they could see the dark figures of men rolling the barrels of fish down to be shipped on the coming steamer.

"She won't be long," declared Taylor, coming about. "They're getting Kellan's stuff ready for her. But we won't run in till we see if she comes alone. Can you see anything of her lights yet, Madeline?"

"No, I can't see a thing but the swing and heave of the waves," observed Madeline, searching the apparently empty sea.

But abruptly she cried out in a low voice and pointed toward a lapis lazuli hollow between two surge crests of pearl.

"Yes, a sail!" she exclaimed. "A sloop like ours, only larger!"

"It's Beauport, then, as sure as we're afloat!"

"But it can't be Jacques Beauport, Walter. He was on the bridge of the *Titan*."

"Yes, but how long would it take to slip a

Digitized by Google

boat ashore? It's Beauport, all right. Nobody else would have occasion to make the crossing to Byron tonight."

"But why wouldn't he stay on the bridge and cross with the *Titan* if need be?"

"The *Titan* daren't try it and perhaps miss me. They couldn't tell for sure, you see, just where we'd gone. We might be crossing to Byron or we might have run only a little way off shore to elude them with the intention of returning to Coffin Island again. You understand their moves? The *Titan* couldn't do anything else in reason but stand off Grand Entry to see I didn't get aboard the steamer there, with Jacques trying to locate us in the sloop if we'd gone off shore for good.

"Yes, Jacques has guessed again, and guessed right at that. He has a scent like a hound. Likely he has followed our tracks to the lagoon and taken another sloop for Byron on that chance. By Jove, yes—yes, Madeline, I'm right! Look, lights behind his sail, not such a long way behind either, off East Island! Steamer's lights ahead; cruiser's lights behind; the Pictou mail boat and the *Titan!*"

Abruptly he sat down in the cockpit again and filled away toward the Bird Rocks, watching the mainsail grow behind him minute by minute. Jacques had the larger sloop. They saw that plainly. The vaster power of his sail hauled him up on them foot by foot, till they could see his dark mocking face leering at them over every roller crest. Climbing each smooth green slope they mounted, he came, crashing into every trough they left, gaining , gaining till a hail could carry from one craft to the other.

"*Dieu*, a fine chase you've led us!" he roared, tiller in one hand, sheet in the other.

"It's not ended yet," Taylor roared back, "but there's an end to it, Jacques, if you like to see it through. There'll be a fine swell on the Bird Rocks after the storm."

"You *diable* fool, *Capitaine*, you're crazy in the head. Neither man nor devil can land a sloop on the Bird Rocks tonight. Come about and be done with it. The *Titan* will be at Byron in a few moments. Come about, I say!"

Taylor made a feint of coming about, and instantly Jacques shot his sloop up into the wind to stand by. But with Jacques in the wind, Taylor held on, gaining considerably while the Breton cursed from the distance as he came back on his course and began to drive his sloop up anew.

Ahead loomed the Bird Rocks, the Little Bird dark as an ocean cavern but the Great Bird flaming with the burning beacon that cast its rays more than a score of miles across those waters of storm. Huge seas were bombing the three-hundred foot rock upon which it stood, and Madeline saw at a glance that the landing, difficult at all times, was never more difficult than now.

"There's Damion Cormier warning us off!" she cried. "And Mrs. Cormier, too. The waves are breaking high up the rock." Taylor stared up the spray-sheeted rocks, up the pillar of flame, to see the minute faces of the lighthouse-keeper and his wife looking down at them and waving frantic warnings. Also, he saw a big net basket being lowered and two men dropping down and yelling something to them that sounded like shoutings from the depths of a well in the demoniacal tumult of the breaking surge.

"Who are those yelling at us?" shouted Taylor, raising his voice for Madeline's ear not two feet away.

"Arsène Turbide and Charles!" she shouted back. "They're helping Damion. I expect they're saying we'd better jump when we touch the rocks. There's no hope of saving the sloop, Walter?"

"Not a fighting hope! Keep close to me when the crash comes so that I can get my hands on you!"

He cast a hasty glance over his shoulder and stared straight into Beauport's grinning stubble-bearded face once more. Over the face, bobbing in its cockpit, he glimpsed the lights of the Pictou mail boat and those of the cruiser *Titan* like the lanterns of Fate in the distance. The mail boat had made her call at Byron and was steaming rapidly for the Bird Rocks. While the *Titan* was evidently patroling midway with a two-fold purpose, that of keeping watch on the waters in the vicinity of Byron to prevent Taylor leaving if he should have made a secret landing there and that of speaking the Pictou steamer for word of him on its return from the Bird Rocks.

"Ha, *Capitaine*," laughed Beauport, "the chase has narrowed down to one lone isle in the Gulf, and we are all here with you. There is no escape."

He recklessly drove his sloop up abeam of them on an immense roller, so dangerously close that Taylor cried out in warning.

Digitized by Google

"Sheer off! Spill your wind!" he bellowed. "You'll jam us first thing——"

But Jacques held his sheet with a turn, refusing to cast off. He drifted down on them with the apparent intention of boarding them, and the next instant the locked sloops spun high and crashed into the black cliffs of the Great Bird.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN THE HEART OF THE BUOY

AS THEIR bodies, flung like manikins from the grinding sloops, struck the cliffs, Taylor seized Madeline and clung desperately, blindly, swept by the upshooting spray, hands and feet in the crevice of the worn rock, his water-blinded eyes straining for sight of the running Turbides—till with a wild shout their brown faces appeared and their brown hands slipped over the cliffs, pulling them in as seamen haul a net.

"*Mon Dieu,* Mademoiselle Madeline!" screeched Arsène. "It is the ghost of you! and—and——"

"Taylor, Captain Taylor!" panted the Gloucester man.

"But what stark madness was in you to come here in a sloop in this sea?" demanded Charles. "And the other man, Captain Taylor? Who sailed the other sloop so like a devil that did not care?"

"His—his body!" exclaimed Taylor, his chest still heaving from the strain.

He pointed to a brown smudge lodged on a ledge of the crags.

"No, not his body—nothing but his coat, floated up out of his cockpit, I would guess!" announced Arsène, making a dive for the ledge and clambering back with Beauport's casque in his hands.

"Aye, he was in his jersey and sitting on his folded casque," confirmed Taylor.

"He was a Breton, eh?" deduced Arsène running his hand into the patch pockets inside the breast.

"Jacques Beauport!" Madeline breathed. "*Mon Dieu,* you say so? A bold sailor gone on his last cruise, then! And look, he has left us some message or other."

Arsène drew out a wet, crumpled piece of paper and handed it to Taylor.

"Here, Captain Taylor, you are a better reader than I am, no doubt!"

Still in a sort of daze from the shock of the dashing on the rocks, Taylor examined the paper under the glow of the beacon, and at a glance he recognized it as a telegram from the Fisheries Department at St. John's, a telegram dispatched to Jacques at Humbermouth and, failing delivery there, relayed to the Grindstone station of the Magdalens over the newly repaired cable.

"Listen, Madeline," Taylor begged in a voice that trembled with gladness:

> Recent decision of Hague gives American fishermen use of disputed bays and harbors. Conduct your fishing stations accordingly. This is official notice to all merchants.
>
> Same official notice awaits *Titan* and other Service vessels at sea when they make Humbermouth.

He turned to her with the gladness in his voice reflected in his face.

"He was reckless! He was mad!" Taylor avowed. "He kept that official notice dark and tried his worst to send me back on the *Titan* to St. John's. And, by heavens, he has paid the price!"

Before the astonished Turbides Madeline seized Taylor's hands, her eyes shining in ecstasy.

"Then all thay can do now is fine you, Walter!" she rejoiced. "They can't imprison you at St. John's and try you for a breach of the Newfoundland laws. You were in waters you had a right to, and there's only the Sunday infraction. They can't do anything but fine you, can they?"

"Not legally," exulted Taylor, "but I don't trust that *Titan* and its commander who was such a friend of Beauport's. And they've acted so high-handedly that I'm not going back to St. John's to pay that fine till I go of my own sweet will, Madeline—till we both go of our own sweet will! We must give the cruiser the slip yet or they may trump up some other charge against me. Quick, here's the Pictou mail boat coming in now!"

"Oh, Mrs. Cormier will help us, you may be sure of that!" declared Madeline as they raced after the Turbides over the rocks toward the lighthouse. "She knows me well, and Damion too."

They were running swiftly, so as to climb the light before the steamer should get in close enough to sight them. They did not know who commanded her. It might be some one who would readily turn them over to the *Titan,* or again it might be some one

Digitized by Google

who bore no love toward the spying fishery vessels.

They could take no chance, but ran at top speed, disturbing acres of sea birds that made the rocks their nesting grounds and sending them aloft in clamoring flocks. The air above their heads was filled with caterwauling gulls and ghostly gannets huge as geese slanting weirdly round and round in the blinding lighthouse beams.

Into the big net basket Taylor and Madeline leaped and were hurriedly drawn up the pillar to the wondering Cormier and his wife above.

"My dear Madeline!" gasped Mrs. Cormier. "I had no idea there was a woman in either of those sloops, and I never dreamed it would be you. Why were you trying to drown yourself like that? Were you both out fishing when the storm came up?"

"No, no," explained Madeline the impulsive, throwing her arms about Mrs. Cormier's neck and kissing her. "We are both fugitives, Captain Taylor and I, and you must smuggle us aboard the Pictou boat this minute. The French cruiser *Titan* is out there watching for Captain Taylor, and we must get past it."

In brief sentences she went on to enlighten them as to the reason of their flight.

"But we must be quick!" she concluded. "Come, hide us in anything you're sending back, empty boxes, empty barrels, anything."

"There are some deal boxes," spoke the crafty Cormier, "but I am a little afraid of their small size."

"What about the buoy?" cut in the quick-eyed Taylor.

He pointed to a large buoy, which, judging from its scarred condition, had evidently been lately taken off the reefs.

"Are you sending it back, Cormier?" he demanded.

"Yes," nodded Damion, "back to be repainted."

"By Jove, then that's it!" decided Taylot, springing to the buoy and taking off the cover. "They'll never see anything suspicious in a buoy. Only its weight might give us away unless you have the Turbides handle it, Cormier."

"But yes, I will see to that," promised Damion. "Hurry in with you. There goes her whistle. She is here."

Taylor raised Madeline, lowered her into the standing buoy and climbed in himself. Damion Cormier replaced the cover, but instead of using the bolt fastenings and clamping it on, he fastened it only temporarily with a loop of rope, the ends of which were dropped inside so that Taylor could slip the cover when he wished.

The interior was cramped, oppressive, but enough air filtered through the cover to prevent any danger of suffocation. For a few silent minutes they waited, hearing nothing but the movements of Cormier and his wife, till the rumble of the voices of Charles and Arsène sounded faintly in their ears.

Then they felt themselves uplifted by the Turbides, lowered in the net basket to the creak of the working windlass, bumped into a boat and hoisted to the mail steamer's deck. Another freshly painted buoy, several boxes, sacks, bundles and tins knocked them about roughly in the interchange, for it was a busy quarter of an hour to land the lighthouse supplies for its four inhabitants and the Pictou boat did not care to linger long by the beetling cliffs where the waves broke with appalling force, sending the spray flying upward for a full hundred and fifty feet against the crags.

It was impossible to anchor. Madeline and Taylor inside the buoy could feel the slow throb of the propeller and knew the steamer was lying bow on to the roll with just enough headway to keep her stationary while the boxes and bales were slung.

"Where shall we put it, Captain Cumberland?" they heard Charles and Arsène ask finally.

"It's Captain Cumberland, Walter," whispered Madeline. "That's splendid. He's a friend of my father and me."

"Better put it on the bridge," they heard a gruff voice direct. "There are heavy seas breaking, and I nearly lost the other off the forward deck coming over!"

Again they felt themselves carried by the Turbides up the bridge ladder, across the platform and lashed to the bridge rail under the weather cloths. Some one came and stood beside. Captain Cumberland's gruff voice rumbled in the speaking tube. The steamer's siren blew, and the throb of the propeller quickened.

"We're under way to the mainland at last, Madeline!" breathed Taylor tensely.

Suddenly, like the weak production of a shout in the receiver of a telephone, they

Digitized by Google

caught the blare of a megaphone from across a cable's length of sea.

"Ahoy, steamer! Ahoy, Captain Cumberland! Seen anything of Beauport or Taylor round the Bird Rocks? Did you sight two sloops anywhere there?"

"Not a thing!" roared Cumberland through his own megaphone. "Don't try to put a sloop story over on me. A sloop couldn't live three minutes round the Bird Rocks tonight, let alone land there. The seas are breaking half-way up the Great Bird!"

"Right O!" came back. "Then our man must be hiding around Coffin or East yet. We'll just keep you in sight, if you don't mind, till you're well clear of the Islands. Good-by. And *bon voyage!*"

"Safe!" exulted Taylor.

And heart to heart in the gloom of the buoy, his lips found hers.

For an hour the Pictou boat held on her homeward course before they heard the feet of Captain Cumberland passing by them on his way to the chart room. Taylor silently slipped the cover of the buoy, and like apparitions they rose, heads and shoulders visible, before Cumberland's incredulous eyes.

"God bless my seafaring soul!" he ejaculated as he recognized the two whose flight had put all the Islands in a turmoil and for news of whom the cruiser *Titan* had pestered him at every port of call.

Taylor poised the heavy cover of the buoy in mock menace.

"Captain Cumberland, I must warn you not to alter your course a single point!" he threatened.

The gray-haired Cumberland put out a hand to each of them, his wrinkled eyes smiling into Madeline's eyes of Mediterranean blue.

"Captain Taylor, you may put that missile down," he laughed. "You have a mightier weapon here!"

Playfully he kissed Madeline's hand and, still laughing, shuffled on to his chart room.

"Back in a moment," he nodded. "I just want to have a glance at the chart before I order the wheelsman to put her over for Pictou."

Together Madeline and Taylor stepped out of the buoy to the dim spray-swept bridge with the pearl-crested billows rolling wide on either quarter and the moon shining through a curtain of radium cloud lace.

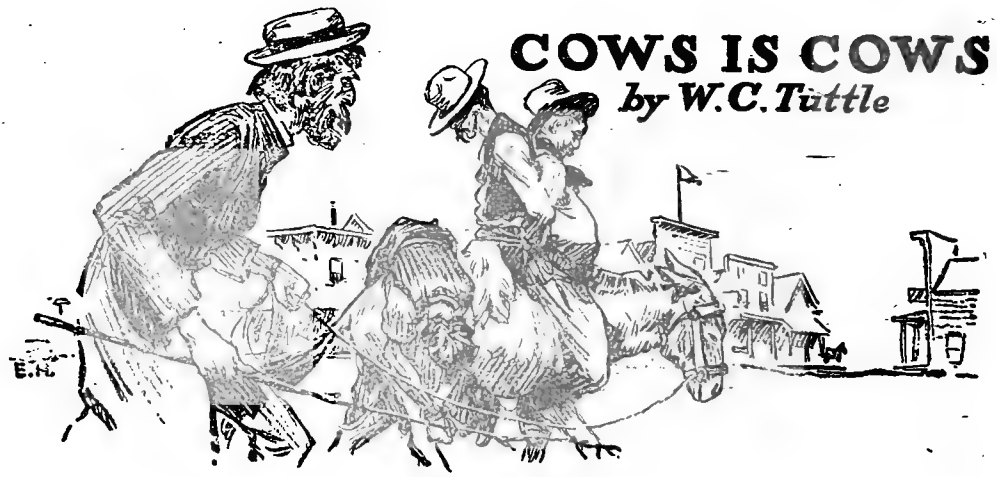
"Home! Home on a deck once more!" rejoiced Taylor, drawing the night air and the salt savor and the smell of paint and rope and canvas into his lungs with a mighty draft.

"Aye, Walter, 'I Shall Come Home When the Ebb Tide Fows,'" murmured Madeline. "Do you remember?"

Very softly she began to sing the words of the song that had greeted Taylor the first night he was hurled on Amherst Beach:

I shall come home when the ebb-tide flows;
Go where I may, there is One who knows;
Fierce though the gale,
I shall prevail;
I shall come home when the ebb-tide flows.

Digitized by Google



COWS IS COWS

by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Precedents in Piperock," "Honest to Doughgod," etc.

"THEY who live by the sword shall perish by the sword," says he.

"Well," says Magpie Simpkins, sheriff of Yellow Rock County, picking his six-shooter off the table and shoving it into his holster, "if that's the case the mortality uh this here county is going to be uh danged long ways below par. Swords ain't stylish uh tall, and ain't been for some little time. They're too danged local for good fighting. I prefers old man Colt's products."

"Just uh figure uh speech, brother," explains the hairy one. "It means that as uh man lives so shall he die. Sabe?"

"Then you'll sure pass out audible, old trailer," says Magpie. "Ever since you invades my premises you ain't done nothing but talk, talk, talk. Don't you have nothing to do but orate uplift opinions?"

"It is my mission, brother. I carry the light to dark places, and I have been called to this end of the earth to scatter seeds."

He sure looked like uh sower. He's danged near as tall as Magpie Simpkins, and if anything he's uh little narrower. He wears uh long black coat, and tucks his pantlegs into the tops of his number twelve boots, which are uh heap run over at the heels, making him arch at the knees. His face is uh cross between Sandy Claws, uh bock-beer sign and uh bale uh fox-tail grass. He punctuates his uplift remarks by spitting through uh hole in the front of his mouth where uh tooth used to stand. He's wearing uh straw hat, the same uh which was made man-sized, and it balances on top of his ears like uh teeter-board.

"Called, eh?" says Magpie. "Well, you sure didn't get called for much. What seems to be your trade, anyway?"

"I'm uh Bringer of Light, brother. Meek and lowly I come——"

"Bringer uh Light, eh?" interrupts Magpie. "Never mind the meek part. Me and Ike are both meek and lowly. If yuh got uh good supply uh seeds yuh might scatter some where some of our rustling friends would pick 'em up."

"Rustling?" pronounces the Bringer uh Light. "Wouldst explain?"

"Wouldst. Uh rustler is uh man who can't tell another man's stock from his own. It's uh sort uh brand blindness. Sabe?" We're burdened with 'em to the extent that three days, hand running, I've been accused uh negligence and favoritism. Just because I've been duly elected sheriff uh this commonwealth they opines that all I got to do is to bleed and die for my constituents and the glory of the cause. Scenery Sims, Hank Padden, Zeb Abernathy and Johnny Myers is the constituents what endeavors to shape my ends. Yuh might pack uh little light to them four dark places, old-timer."

"Do they amble in darkness?" he asks, hitting uh knot-hole three times straight.

"Blacker than the ace uh spades. What's you name, anyway?"

The hairy one hunches up his shoulders, like uh buzzard with uh full crop, takes an-

Digitized by Google

other shot at that knot-hole and rubs his long hands together.

"I am Obadiah Ezekiel Moses Brown."

"Pshaw!" says Magpie. "Why didn't your folks make uh perfect score while they had uh chance?"

"Meaning which, brother?"

"They left out Proverbs and Genesis. No wonder you're uh Gospel pedler, Obie. I thought at first that you're uh shepherd, but no shepherd ever had names like——"

"He has came," announces uh voice at the open door, and there stands Scenery Sims.

If I had my choice between the friendship of Scenery Sims and that of an old buck sheep, I'd never speak to Scenery again. Scenery orates that he's uh self-made man, that's about the only thing he can't blame nobody else for.

He stands about knee-high to uh tall Injun, wears woolly chaps which comes just below his knees, and has uh voice that would make the E string of uh fiddle blush for shame. He owns the Circle-S brand, which consists of about uh hundred animiles. They looks uh heap like Scenery—sort uh measly looking.

"What has came?" asks Magpie.

"Spade Wilson, the detective," squeaks Scenery. "Jist got in from Helena. Me and Zeb knowed him the minute he rode in. When I says to him, 'Hello, Spade,' he just grins and says, 'Don't advertise it.' "

"Have you seen the Light, brother?" asks Obie, peering at Scenery with one eye, while he aims at the knot-hole with the other—and rings the bell again.

"My gosh!" whistles Scenery, seeing Obie for the first time. "Is that under arrest, Magpie, or can it still be within the law? My gosh A'mighty!"

"This here is Mister Brown," says Magpie. "Mister Sims, meet Mister Brown."

"I gives yuh good cheer, brother," orates Obie, reaching out uh long hand and pumping Scenery's hand some industrious.

"I'll take it," admits Scenery. "How's all your folks, Mister Brown?"

"Obadiah Ezekiel Moses," corrects Obie, biting off uh fresh chew. "They are all in the Great Beyond from which no man ever returneth back."

"All three of 'em?" says Scenery. "That's too danged bad, old-timer. I know just how bad yuh feel. I lost twelve more cows myself last night."

"Don't weep, Scenery," advises Magpie, when Scenery finishes off his discourse in uh wailing tone. "This here cow detective 'll get 'em all back for you."

"Still sore, eh?" pipes Scenery. "Dog-gone it, Magpie, yuh can't blame us can yuh? Me and Johnny and Zeb and Hank can't afford to raise cows and have 'em swiped all the time. As uh sheriff yuh ain't so danged awful bad, except to look at, but as uh catcher of rustlers you don't show uh trace.

"We figures that the only thing to do is to put up uh howl to the Cattlemen's Association, and get 'em to send us uh hyiu detective. They tells us that they're sending Spade Wilson over to us, but we got to stand the expenses. He's private. He sure looks like he could land 'em. He's down at Masterson's playing seven-up with Zeb and Hank. I reckon you'll see him pretty soon."

"Are the ones you mentioned still in darkness?" asks Obie, folding his hands, and rolling his eyes toward the ceiling.

"No," says Scenery. "Leastwise they was getting lit up when I left. Come on down and meet 'em, and have uh scoop or two. They'd admire to see yuh, old-timer."

"The joy of meeting would be mutual," agrees Obie, uncoiling himself from the chair, and taking one parting shot at that knot-hole. "But I never imbibe or look upon the wine when it is red. Lead forth, brother."

"Well, it's your eyes and your stummick," states Scenery, looking up at Obie, like uh squirrel looking up uh tree. "But if I had uh neck as long as you got, I'd shut my eyes to the color and let her sluice."

THEY goes out together, and me and Magpie watches them amble up the street.

"Ain't it funny what mistakes is committed in the name uh humanity," orates Magpie. "Now, there goes uh misfit on uh forlorn cause, Ike, and he's just as happy over it as uh half-breed kid with uh coyote pup. Bringer uh Light! That face uh his would snuff uh candle at sixty yards. I reckon this is the delegation coming down to see us."

I takes uh look and sees Hank Padden, Zeb Abernathy, Johnny Myers, Scenery Sims and uh fifth person ambling down our way, and behind them, with his coat-tails

Digitized by Google

flopping in the breeze comes the Bringer uh Light.

"Sheriff Simpkins, I'm pleased to make yuh used to Spade Wilson," says Zeb Abernathy, bobbing his head toward the stranger. "Mister Wilson is the detective from Helena."

"Pleased to know yuh," says Wilson. "I've heard of you."

"This here person is Ike Harper," informs Scenery, pointing me out, like I was uh horrible example. "Ike is sort of uh e-mergency deputy sheriff. When he ain't doing that, he's resting."

"We has hopes that you can assist Mister Wilson uh little, Magpie," orates Hank Padden. "Uh course we don't wish yuh to do anything to interfere with your usual occupation, but any help yuh can give the detective to stop the reign uh terror will be appreciated."

"Hank," replies Magpie, "your insinuations cuts me deep-like. Uh course, being uh peace officer in good standing with smart men, it's my duty to give assistance to the weak and needy, but I can't figure how you-all can insult my abilities by asking me to help somebody else. I'm sheriff—me!

"It ain't reasonable to suppose that Kirk Kelso or any of his gang is operating in this county. Just because the party what took them cows out of the Triangle corral left uh card with compliments uh Kirk Kelso on it, don't argue that he done it. Somebody just done that cause Kirk Kelso's reputation for foolishness just about covers that kind uh stunt. He never was over in this part of the state, and ain't been heard of for uh long time. Somebody's trading on his rep."

"Them cows is gone, ain't they?" wails Johnny Myers. "Yuh can't dispute that can yuh? All you do is argue. When it comes to sheriffing you're about as much use as uh bulldog in uh sheep camp."

All the time this Spade Wilson person leans against the wall, and grins. He's uh long-legged, red-headed hombre, with uh face that resembles uh contour map of the Bad Lands. He's got uh lazy look about his face, and his eyes reminds me of the eyes of uh bronc what's trying to bluff yuh into thinking he ain't got uh back left in his carcase.

"I agrees with them sentiments exactly, Johnny," squeaks Scenery. "Bulldog in uh sheep camp! Haw! Haw! Haw! That sure fits like uh glove."

"Agreeing with sarcasm is the privilege uh fools," states uh voice at the door, and Obie strolls in. "I distribute the Light to fools and wise men, alike."

"Who's your friend, Magpie?" laughs Hank Padden. "He opines that he's uh light. What sheep range did he drift from?"

"My flocks is on the seven hills, and I search for the lost, strayed and stolen, I am here to shed the—" but Spade Wilson slams the door in his face and cuts off his discourse.

"I hates uh fool," states Scenery Sims.

"All fools do," orates Obie, from the open window. "Uh wise man uses his time for better things," and then we sees him amble back to town.

"Well," says Zeb, "now that the Light has left us we may as well finish this business. Magpie, we've talked it over uh heap and we're come to the conclusion that we better give Mister Wilson uh free hand. He opines that it's better for him to work alone, and we promises to stand for anything he does. He orates that maybe we'll be shocked and pained at what he does, but we've agreed to suffer in silence. Ain't that the how of it?"

"It sure is," agrees Hank, and Scenery and Zeb and Johnny nods.

"And," states Hank, "no matter what happens we don't want no interference from the sheriff's office. Sabe? If yuh can't help him none, Magpie, we wishes yuh to shut your eyes to what he does. The three of us is paying the bills."

"Why waste all that coversation, Hank?" grins Magpie. "I ain't going to say uh danged thing. Will Mister Wilson use our little jail or will me and Ike build him uh bull-pen?"

"I reckon the jail will hold 'em," says Hank. "Mister Wilson says that he thinks it's uh gang uh four, and that the jail will hold that many."

"I'd be uh heap pleased to get them twenty Herefords back," states Johnny Myers. "Them was all blooded stock, and they stands the Triangle uh lot uh money."

"Also, I'm loser to the extent of about forty head," wails Scenery. "The same night they lifts that bunch from Zeb, they drifts uh bunch uh mine along, too. Let's go up to Buck's and get uh little elixir. So much talk makes me dry."

Digitized by Google

The four of them ambles back uptown and leaves me and Magpie and Spade in the office.

"Got any idea of where to look for these here rustlers?" asks Spade.

"You're the doctor," says Magpie, cocking his feet against the table, and rolling uh smoke. "I ain't got uh danged thing to say about it. All I know is this: I'm the sheriff uh Yaller Rock County, and I feels able to cope with any rustler what ever vented uh brand, but any time that bunch uh misfire cow-owners opines to hire outside help, I just lays doggo. If the time drags too heavy on my hands I may get out and rustle uh few myself. Sabe?"

"Not wishing to upset your good resolutions," says Spade, with uh grin, "but I'd sure like to understand uh little about these four people what hires me. Are they the principal cow-owners uh this range?"

"Uh-huh," agrees Magpie. "That old dough-faced maverick, with the meeker than Moses expression on his face is Hank Padden. Hank owns the Seven-A outfit and uh grouch. He ranges his cows on the Roarin' Crick breaks, and his grouch any place.

"Johnny Myers is the foreman of the Triangle by marriage. He married the female what inherited it from her husband. Zeb Abernathy owns the Cross-L herd. He looks so danged much like uh parson that it interferes with his cussing.

"The little tin-whistle runt, with the canary voice, is Scenery Sims. He sold his sheep over in the Big Hole country, and went in for cows. Not having much idea above uh sheep, somebody unloads the worst-looking bunch uh cow critters on him yuh ever seen. Scabby lot uh mongrel stuff, but Scenery opines that they're the greatest stock on earth. Now, yuh know all about 'em, Mister Wilson, so shake out your rope and go to it."

"Got an extra star?" asks Spade, rolling uh cigaret one handed, without spilling uh grain of tobacco. Uh man ain't got much to do when he takes the time to learn a trick like that. Magpie fumbles in his desk and tosses Spade uh star.

"Thanks," says Spade. "As uh general rule I don't carry uh star, but, being as this job is an exception, I may need one plumb bad."

"You're welcome," says I. "Being as that is the only star in the county, except the one what shines on Magpie's manly bosom, it probably lets me out of uh lot uh grief."

"It takes nerve to put the deadwood on uh rustler," orates Spade, and I agrees.

"I ain't lost no rustlers. Why should I use up my visible supply uh nerve? I never owned but one cow, and no rustler ever got her. I called her Sylvia. She was just emerging from calf-hood into cow, when she mistook uh grizzly for something to play with."

"I thank you for the information and the star," says Spade. "I'll go up now and have uh little talk with my employers. Do you aim to help me any in this hunt?"

"Not any," replies Magpie. "My jail is always open to your prisoners, but further than that I'm neutral. Ike's neutral too, ain't yuh, Ike?"

"You know whereof you speak, Magpie," says I.

"That feller ain't going to be able to do nothing," I argues with Magpie, after Spade leaves.

"You're wrong, Ike," says he. "That feller is going to do something that I didn't think was possible. He's going to pry some real money out of Scenery Sims."

WE SETS down to enjoy uh smoke, when in comes Obie, and sets down in his favorite chair.

"How's your Light working?" asks Magpie, and Obie grins.

"Fine, brother. There is dark places in Piperock which need illuminating uh heap but my mission is not confined to the city. I must work among the meek and lowly, and in order to fulfil my mission I must engage uh mode of locomotion. Dost know of one who would loan me uh horse?"

"Dost not," replies Magpie. "Me and Ike has got uh burro named Lodestone, which yuh might borrow. He ain't much for looks, being originally of uh yaller hue, but he'll get yuh there in time for meals."

"The vehicle of the Lord," says Obie, pleased like. "I'll take Lodestone."

Obie was pleased with Lodestone. Lodestone looks Obie over, and goes right back to sleep. I reckon he saw uh critter of his own ambitions, and figgered that uh trip with him would be uh vacation.

When Obie rode that burro out of town it sure was uh thing to look at. Obie is so long that he has to set on Lodestone's rump,

Digitized by Google

and his long legs stick out in front like uh pair uh buggy shafts.

"All he needs is another mule and uh singletree, and he's uh tandem," howls Magpie. He waves au revoir to Obie and the other jackass, and then relapses into the shade again.

Scenery Sims comes down to whittle uh while, but he ain't received with no open arms. Me and Magpie holds sort of uh local conversation, to the utter exclusion of Scenery.

"Ike," says Magpie, "ain't it funny what critters the Lord produces at times? Now take humans, for instance. I know one person who ain't got brains enough to know when he ain't wanted. He used to be uh shepherd, but he got so danged orn'ary that the sheep wouldn't associate with him no more, so he sold out and comes over here into God's country and tries to raise cattle.

"Now, he didn't show uh lick uh sense, Ike. He's been with the woollies so long that he don't know cows, so somebody sells him uh bunch uh alleged cattle which looks like uh bunch of overgrown goats. Later on some poor deluded rustler, with astigmatism, comes along and burdens himself with what he mistakes in the dark for cows. Now this here runty sheep person opines to pay real money to uh specialist to recover said overgrown goats. I'd say he's showing poor taste."

"Them was cows," pronounces Scenery, in uh chiding way.

"Maybe," agrees Magpie. "Way back in the miocene period, Scenery, them things might have been cows, but they never progressed."

"I want 'em back, just the same. Anything yuh pays real money for is worth wanting back, Magpie. And what is more, I'm going to get 'em back, too, and the person what took 'em is going to suffer in durance vile. Sabe?"

"I love the little trees," says Magpie. "I love the little children and the little squirrels and the little babbling brooks, but, by cripes, I can't seem to strike uh single spark uh love in my bosom fer uh runty ex-shepherd. God A'mighty made uh mistake when he made 'em in the image uh men and furnished 'em with vocal cords."

"I don't like you, Magpie," states Scenery. "By gosh, I don't! I ain't never liked you!"

"Scenery," says Magpie, "them few words changes my opinion uh you uh heap. Honest to grandma, I never thought you had soul enough in your carcass even to hate anybody."

Scenery goes uptown, and as far as we can hear him he's talking to himself.

"I figger that this is going to be uh vacation for us, Ike," states Magpie. "We'll just lay around and let 'em detect, eh?"

"You spoke from my soul that time," I agrees.

Zeb Abernathy comes down to our office the next day, and sets down on the step.

"Your yaller burro stayed at my place last night," says he.

"Alone?" I asks.

"He brought the Light," laughs Zeb. "He's going over to illuminate the Triangle this evening. Seen anything of Spade Wilson lately?"

"He ain't been here today," I replies. Zeb sets uh while, and then pilgrims uptown.

The next day me and Magpie is setting in the office, playing seven-up, when we hears somebody yell outside.

"Here's your first prisoner," states Spade Wilson. Me and Magpie stares at the party with him, and then grins wide.

"We don't arrest 'em for getting drunk in this county," states Magpie.

"He ain't drunk," replies Spade. "He's uh rustler."

"Rustler ——!" snorts Magpie. "He owns the Seven-A outfit."

"Uh-huh," agrees Spade. "He'd own the Triangle, too, in uh short time if I let him alone. I find him setting on the top of his corral at the Poison Springs, admiring them Triangle Herefords."

"Magpie!" yelps Hank. "Tell this danged lying fool that——"

"You tell him, Hank," advises Magpie. "Didn't I hear yuh say that you agreed to suffer in silence?"

"You can't deny that them cows were there, can yuh?" grins Spade, and Hank shakes his head, sad-like.

"No, I reckon—aw ——! I never put them there!"

"Maybe the jury will believe it," replies Spade, and then we introduces Hank to the Hotel de Simpkins. He don't make no further protest. He just flops down on uh bunk and cusses low and earnest-like. We waits until we feels that he's about cussed

Digitized by Google

out, and me and Magpie goes over to the door.

"Hoist with his own petard, Ike," orates Magpie.

"Yes," says I, "but it ain't no more than I expected."

I never noticed that Hank had one boot off. Magpie wipes the blood off my temple and fixes the cut up with court-plaster, and we resumes our little game.

"I've always had uh sneaking suspicion uh Hank," states Magpie, loud enough for Hank to hear, and Hank snorts like uh scared bronc, but don't comment none. I makes him throw his boots over in the corner and hold up his hands when I brings in his supper.

Uh delegation from the Seven-A comes down to try and get us to turn Hank loose, but we locks up, and they don't stay long.

The next morning, Hank is too danged mad to talk but he will eat. We feeds him and then starts our game, again.

I reckon it's about noon, when we hears a noise at the front door and there we finds Spade and Johnny Myers.

"Hello, Johnny," says I. "How's tricks?"

"Go to ——!" snaps Johnny. "Tell this blasted misfire sleuth where to head in at, Magpie."

"You ain't gagged none are yuh?" asks Magpie. "Maybe yuh don't care to talk to uh man you're paying uh salary to."

"Gol blast his ignorant pelt!" howls Johnny. "He arrested me for branding uh calf!"

"Better turn him loose," I advises. "Branding calves is uh common occupation in this country."

"This one was uh Circle-S," replies Spade, with uh grin.

"The Circle-S had been partly vented, and the Triangle run on with uh running-iron. Pretty raw stuff! The calf is in that corral near the Medicine Crick ford, where we can get it for evidence."

"Johnny," says Magpie, sad-like, "if there was uh drop of forgiveness in my soul for uh rustler, you're the one I'd sprinkle. I've always liked you, Johnny, and I've always had uh lot uh respect for your ability as uh cowman, but right now I can't dig deep enough in my soul to find sympathy for you. I can't grieve over any cowman who will take uh chance on rustling one uh them scabby little critters what Scenery designates as cows."

"My Gawd! What's he been doing?" snorts Hank, as we leads Johnny into the cell.

"Petty larceny," says I. "He stole uh calf from Scenery Sims."

Johnny and Hank looks at each other for uh spell, and then Hank turns, appealing-like to us, and says:

"Ain't yuh got no other cell in this jail, Magpie?"

"Sorry, Hank," says Magpie. "I know the pollution is awful, but there ain't uh danged thing I can do. Maybe I can fumigate the cell uh little later on."

SPADE goes back to town, me and Magpie resumes our game, and Hank and Johnny argues in low tones. The next time our game is interrupted, it's Obie, the Bringer uh Light.

"How yuh shining?" asks Magpie.

Obie sprawls on the table and takes uh greeting shot at that knot-hole.

"Nicely, brother," says he. "The path is dark, but I bring the glow what guides all men. I hear that the minions of the law have been busy of late."

"Uh-huh," agrees Magpie. "That is, if yuh designate uh detective as uh minion of the law."

"Have they been walking in darkness?" asks Obie. "I'm here to snatch brands."

"You better leave brands alone, old-timer," I advises. "That's what they're in durance vile for."

"May I have converse with them?" he asks, and Magpie waves his hand toward the cell door. Obie wanders over and leans against the door and we proceeds to deal uh new hand.

"I come bringing great cheer," we hears Obie state, and the next thing I know something bounces off my head and slams against the wall. I sees seven million trumps in my hand for uh minute, and she shrinks to jist six cards. Obie is leaning against the wall, with his long hands hanging loose at his sides, and his eyes rolled toward the ceiling.

"We will now sing hymn number—uh—huh—hum," announces Obie, and slides to the floor in uh heap.

"Ike," says Magpie, "yuh sure done uh brilliant trick when yuh loaned Hank that walrus-tusk cribbage-board. Whoever

Digitized by Google

throwed it sure made uh perfect billiard shot. Yuh can thank Obie for stopping most of it."

"Magpie, you keep that blasted thing out uh here!" yells Hank.

"Who in —— wants cheer, anyway?"

Obie crawls to uh standing position and rubs his head. Then he looks around, foolish-like, and takes uh fresh chew. He takes uh shot at that knot-hole and misses it by three feet.

"How's the Light working, Obie?" asks Magpie.

Obie runs his hand tenderly over the lump over his eye.

"I feel like—uh—uh——"

"Trimmed lamp?" suggests Magpie. Obie thinks for uh minute and then nods slow-like. He goes outside, gets on Lodestone, and the two of 'em points away from Piperock.

"I never did like uh preacher," states Hank, in sort of an explanatory tone.

"Me neither," agrees Magpie. "But I don't try to kill 'em just cause I don't like em, Hank. Maybe somebody needs 'em."

We enjoys ourselves in our simple way until the next morning, when we hears Spade Wilson yell outside. We goes outside and observes Spade's prisoner. It's Zeb Abernathy. Zeb looks uh whole lot put out about something.

"Well, well!" says Magpie, pleased-like. "Come right in, Zebbie. I'm getting so used to dry nursing prominent citizens that I welcomes yuh with all my heart."

"This—uh—cross between uh—huh—my Gawd!" splutters Zeb. "He arrests me for branding one uh my own calves!"

Zeb shakes his fist at Spade, but the detective just grins and rolls uh cigaret.

"What's his brand?" asks Spade.

"Cross-L," I answers.

"He don't own no Seven-A stuff does he?"

"That wasn't no Seven-A!" howls Zeb. "Gosh A'mighty, can't yuh spell?"

"The calf is tied to uh tree, and I'll send somebody out to get it for evidence. She's uh Seven-A, all right."

Zeb shakes his head, sad-like, and then turns to Magpie.

"Put me in," says he. "Put on two extra padlocks and hire uh guard or two, Magpie. Jail is the only place where uh man is safe from uh liar like him."

"You said he was uh competent man," chides Magpie. "He sure comes highly recommended."

"Highly ——!" howls Zeb. "Don't talk to me, Magpie!"

"Gee cripes!" yelps Hank, as we eases Zeb into the cell.

"What you doing here, Zeb?"

"Branding Seven-A calves," says I.

The three of them looks each other over for uh spell, and then Hank steps over and stares Zeb square in the eyes.

"You been stealing my calves?" snaps Hank, and Zeb swells up like an indignant old woodchuck.

"You danged old timber rat!" howls Zeb, jumping up and down like uh Injun full uh turpentine. "Do you mean to insinuate that I'd——"

"I'm asking," states Hank.

"You be danged! Do you think for uh minute that I'd lower myself to such uh state as to rustle one uh your lousy animiles, Hank Padden? Dang your hide, I wouldn't let uh Cross-L cow drink out of the same spring with uh Seven-A. What are you and Johnny Myers doing here, eh?"

"What are they in for, Ike?" he asks me, when they don't seem inclined to reply.

"Johnny was arrested for branding one uh Scenery Sims's little calves, and Mister Wilson discovered Hank setting on the top rail of his corral, gloating over them Triangle Herefords."

"Oh, ho! So that was it, eh?" cuts in Johnny Myers. "I asks Hank what he was put in for and he told me it was none uh my danged business. No wonder! My Herefords, eh?"

"Johnny, that's uh danged——"

"Don't say it, Hank," advises Johnny. "You been coveting them white-faced cows for uh long time, but by cripes, I didn't think you'd steal 'em."

Hank sets down on his bunk and stares at his toes. I reckon he's too danged mad even to stand up. Zeb seems to forget his grouch, and he leans against the wall and whoops:

"Haw! Haw! Haw! Johnny Myers, I opined that you knowed something about cows but—haw, haw, haw! Rustling them Circle-S calves eh? My Gawd! Taking uh chance on going to Deer Lodge for uh critter like that."

I figures that about one more word will start uh mix-up so I says:

"I'm going up to rustle some dinner for

Digitized by Google

you fellers, and I don't want no trouble to start while I'm gone. Sabe? We only got one cell in this jail and if you fellers can't live in peace and brotherly love, I'll have to picket some of yuh out in the corral. Also, if you smash them two cots you'll have to sleep on the floor. Contemplate on your own sins and let personalities alone."

Piperock is quite some excited. There's representatives from all of the cow outfits, and it sounds like that all was trying to talk to once. Swede Johnson, foreman of the Seven-A outfit, is standing on uh card table, waving his long arms and talking uh streak, and over on the pool table is Andy Johnson, of the Triangle, holding uh special indignation meeting.

"You can't never make uh jury believe that Hank Padden would steal!" yelps Swede. "I wouldn't put it uh bit past Johnny Myers, but——"

"Johnny is as straight as uh string!" howls Andy. "He's got uh first-class alibi too. Nobody could convict uh man if he did steal uh Circle-S calf. Johnny's too good uh judge uh cows to even think uh stealing uh runty little——"

"Cows is cows!" squeaks Scenery. "Dog-gone yuh, Andy——"

"PEACE be with yuh, brothers," orates uh voice at the door, and there stands the Bringer uh Light. He rubs the top of his wobbly straw hat against the top of the door, and masticates some industrious. "Peace again be with yuh."

"I'll take 'em both," accepts Buck Masterson. "That will make two pieces. Have uh little drink, old trailer?"

"Lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine," states Obie. "I thank thee, brother."

"My Gawd!" squeaks Scenery. "I wonder if that human lodge-pole thought somebody was going to kiss him!"

Scenery catches sight of me, and immediate and soon comes over and whispers so loud in my ear that yuh could hear him for uh mile:

"Don't take uh chance uh letting Johnny Myers loose, Ike. He's uh sheep in wolf's clothes."

"You're going too danged far in your remarks!" yells Pete Gonyer, grabbing Scenery by the back of the neck and the seat of the pants.

"This is uh free—" begins Scenery, but Pete heaves him plumb into the corner, and his carcass shakes the whole place.

"Well!" says Spade Wilson, from the doorway. "This seems to be uh lively gathering."

Nobody offers him uh greeting, so he swaggers up to the bar and buys himself uh drink.

"Peace be with yuh, brother," orates Obie, holding up his hand in the Piegan peace sign. "Peace be with yuh."

Spade stares at Obie for uh minute and then fills his glass.

"I thought I left you at the Seven-A ranch," says Spade. "How in —— did you get here so quick on uh burro?"

"I know not," answers Obie, taking uh fresh chew. "I carry the Light to all men, and speed is of little account. Today I am here, tomorrow I am there. No matter. There is many dark places."

Just then Scenery crawls out from under the chair and leans against the wall.

"— country, and I got uh right to orate my sentiments!" he croaks, starting right in where he left off when he hit the wall. "I reckon I got uh right to howl ain't I? I don't suppose that Pete Gonyer would howl if somebody stole his cows. Oh, no! He'd yell so danged loud that the soldiers at Fort Missoula would get right on uh train to come over and put down an Injun uprising. I'm one upright and honest man, and I wants——"

"I wants too, Mister Sims," states Spade, grinning. He reaches over and snaps handcuffs on Scenery's wrists, and backs him out of the crowd.

"What's he done?" yells somebody in the crowd.

"Well," drawls Spade, "if some uh you fellers will go out to Scenery's barn yuh will find uh fresh Cross-L cow hide in his barn."

"That's uh danged, dinged lie!" wails Scenery. "I never had uh Cross-L hide in my barn in my whole life!"

Two-Cinch Hogan is asleep on the porch when we comes out, and he wakes up enough to hear Scenery's oration.

"That's right, Scenery," he states, with the tears running down his crooked nose. "Neither have I. Ain't got nothing in my barn. Ain't got no barn. Poor's uh church rat—me! Let me go to jail, too, eh? All good men in jail now. Nothin' but riff-raff outshide any more."

Two-Cinch lays down in the sun and

Digitized by Google

goes to sleep again, and we escorts Scenery to durance vile.

Magpie looks foolish-like at Scenery, and then points to the cell door. Our other three prisoners are looking out, and they are sure one fine looking bunch.

Hank has two beautiful black eyes and is shy all his shirt except the neck-band and one cuff. Johnny's got hills and valleys all over his countenance, and is nursing uh sore jaw. Zeb grins at us and spits out through the place his front teeth used to inhabit.

"Why?" asks Hank, pointing at Scenery.

"I found uh fresh Cross-L cow hide in his barn," replies Spade.

Zeb feels of the place where his teeth used to be and, grins sweetly.

"Come in, Scenery," says he, pleasant like. "Walk right in."

"You don't aim to put me in there do yuh?" wails Scenery.

"You deposes that I stole uh Cross-L cow from Zeb, and now you aims to make me mingle with him. This ain't law—it's manslaughter!"

Anyway, Scenery went in.

"Cross-L, eh?" lisps Zeb. "Killed uh Cross-L cow for lunch!"

"Keep your big paws off me, Zeb Abernathy!" squeals Scenery. "I'm uh bad hombre when I'm riled. Johnny Myers stole my——"

"Ho-ho-hold on, old-timer!" stutters Johnny. "Don't accuse me uh rustling! You never owned uh cow, in the first place and anyway——"

"Cows is cows," states Scenery, with uh heap of conviction.

"Better cool down," advises Magpie. "You fellers ought to have more faith in detective work than to go right on rustling after he gets on the job. I could have done as well as he has if I wanted to get myself disliked. I been watching all of you but I just kept my mouth shut and let yuh go on."

The three of them looks at Magpie and then at each other.

"Magpie Simpkins," pronounces Hank Padden, "when I get loose I'm going to remove you from office at the end of uh .45."

"When you get loose, Hank," states Magpie, "I'll probably be Governor of the State."

The next day we holds the hearing.

Old Judge Steele sets at uh card table in the old Mint hall, where we holds our court, and looks at the prisoners over the tops of his glasses. On uh soap box beside him is uh fresh cow hide, bearing the Cross-L brand and that same hide ain't no sweet incense.

On one side of the judge is Pete Gonyer and Andy Johnson holding uh spotted Seven-A calf, and on the other side is old Sam Holt and Ricky Henderson, trying to supress the antics of uh runt of an animile, bearing the Circle-S.

Spade Wilson is the happiest one in the room. That hombre sure is proud of his handiwork.

The judge pounds on his desk and yells for order.

"Hank Padden, tell me your story," he commands.

"Well," says Hank, standing up and hitching up his belt, "I been looking for uh chance to talk, Judge. There is times in uh man's life when he gets so danged shocked and sore that his vocal cords simply freezes up. Mine's thawed out now, and I wishes to orate in uh few words just what I thinks——"

"What you thinks ain't evidence," interrupts the judge. "We'll listen to your story but not your thoughts."

"I never stole them Herefords!" howls Hank. "They was in my corral, but I'll be uh liar——"

"Very likely, Hank!" snaps the judge. "Set down."

"Judge," says Johnny Myers, "I'd like to state——"

"Take the stand, Johnny. All I wants from you is the truth, and I don't want yuh to orate about the loss uh them white-faced cows. Sabe? Tell the court how it comes that you're caught branding uh Circle-S calf."

"That's uh danged lie!" explodes Johnny.

"Ain't that uh Circle-S calf?" asks the judge, pointing at Scenery Sims's animile.

"It don't need uh brand to show who it belongs to," replies Johnny. "Looks like uh goat."

"Cows is cows," squeaks Scenery.

"Set down, Johnny," says the judge. "And I'd admire to have Scenery Sims keep his mouth shut. I'll ask Zeb Abernathy to take the stand."

Zeb stands up and takes uh fresh chew.

"All I've got to say, Judge, is this: Seven-A cattle never did appeal to me. I ain't never stole nothing in my life, and any time

Digitized by Google

I do turn rustler I'm going to steal real honest to grandma cows—me—Zeb Abernathy."

"Don't you say one word against my stock, dang yuh!" yelps Hank.

"Say!" The judge rears up on his hind feet, and hammers on the table with both fists. "What do you cow thieves think this is—uh cattle show? We'll not pass on the merits of cows. Set down, Zeb!

"Scenery Sims, stand up. Don't git so danged squeaky! Speak up like uh man, and anything yuh say can be used against yuh. Sabe?"

"All I got to say is that I been paying real money to the dangest liar on earth!" wails Scenery. "I never had no Cross-L hide in my barn—in my whole life, Judge."

"You're about as honest as the rest, Scenery, so yuh may as well save your breath. I'll call on Ricky Henderson and Andy Johnson to stand up."

"You'll have to hire somebody to hold these calves," puffs Ricky. "If we lets loose there's going to be uh stampede."

Somebody relieves them and they stands up.

"Did you fellers find this here Cross-L hide in Scenery's barn?" asks the judge, indicating the hairy bunch of odors beside him.

"Uh-huh," nods Ricky. "We finds it where——"

"Haw-w-w-w-e-e-e—aw-w-w-w!"

In the door stands Lodestone, with his long ears pointing straight to the front as he sings his song, and on his back is two persons, tied back to back, with their legs tied under Lodestone's belly.

"Hee-e-e-e háw-w-w-w-w!" sings Lodestone again, and then he starts right up through the crowd.

"Clear the court!" yells the judge. "Or-r-r-r-r-der!"

THE judge aims to pound right hard on his table, but he misses his target and hits old Sam Holt right on the head. Old Sam is setting on his haunches, holding onto that calf, and when the judge slams he lets go of the rope and takes uh wallop at the judge.

Clear the court is right! Did yuh ever see two locoed calves in uh crowded room, when they aims to get out, and everybody yelling and shoving—and uh double-burdened jackass trying to force its way inside? Talk about uh bull in uh china shop!

If I'd uh kept clear and watched it from afar I could have seen uh lot more, but somehow I always has to mix into something what don't concern me in the least.

I comes out of the mess with uh chair around my neck, just in time to get my head between Hank Padden's legs and go to the floor again. Along comes uh blatting calf, gets his hind legs through that chair, too, and me and Hank and the calf goes plumb out into the street.

Something steps on my ear, and when I gets back what little sense Ike Harper usually packs with him, I find Judge Steele setting on my lap with his eyes closed.

"Yuh might show uh little dignity for your position, Judge," says I. "Setting on uh man's lap out in the street in the daytime! What'll folks say?"

The judge opens his eyes for uh minute, looks me over in uh sober sort of uh way, and shakes his head.

"Ike," says he, slow-like, sliding off my lap. "Your jackass kicked me as I came out." And then he shows his ancestry by hauling off and kicking me right in the stummick.

Then he gets up and wobbles off down the street. I gets emotional for uh while, and struggles uh heap with my feelings. Finally I gets up and pilgrims into the hall again. At first I thinks she's deserted, but when I looks real close I sees two pair uh boots.

One pair is protruding from under the judge's table, which is caved in on one side, and the other pair is draped over uh chair. The last pair belongs to Magpie. He's snoring like uh shepherd, so I goes over and hauls Scenery Sims out from under the table.

Pretty soon Magpie sets up and looks around. He sizes up the destruction for uh while and then looks at me and Scenery.

"Ike," says he, "I'll bet this is the only building standing in the city."

"Uh-huh," I agrees. "And this one is only standing on the outside. I reckon we might as well take Scenery and put him in jail. He's all we got left now, Magpie."

Magpie gets his bearings, by bracing his feet between two chairs, and we picks up Scenery Sims. Magpie takes him by the shoulders and I get him by the feet, and away we goes wobbling down the street.

Digitized by Google

Scenery don't wake up until we're almost to the jail, when he sort uh shudders and opens his eyes. He looks at me and then whispers:

"Cows is cows."

"Don't—don't make so much noise," croaks Magpie, turning his head, painful like. "Everybody's sleeping."

When we gets in sight of the jail we sees three people on the steps. It's Hank and Johnny and Zeb and they sure looks like the breaking up of uh hard winter. They looks up at us as we pilgrims up, and then slumps down on the steps again.

"Why didn't yuh go inside out of the sun?" I asks, but they just shakes their heads.

"He wouldn't let us," explains Hank, in a faraway voice jerking his thumb toward the door.

We lays Scenery down on the steps and opens the office door. Coming out of the bright light makes it hard for us to see anything inside, but when we gets accustomed to the light, we observes Obie, the Bringer uh Light.

He's tilted back in his favorite chair, with his long legs drawed most to his chin, and when we see him he grins and hits that knot-hole dead center.

"Why didn't yuh let our prisoners in?" asks Magpie.

Obie grins and takes another shot at the hole before he says:

"Ain't got no room. Jail's full."

We steps over and looks into the cell. Three men are sprawling over the bunks, but only one is uh familiar one. This one is hunched up on uh bunk and don't seem much concerned about his surroundings.

"Sorry to bust up court thataway," apologizes Obie. "I brought them two down here, but when I came inside to arrange for my load, that yaller burro wandered right uptown. I just got up there in time to see him kick Kirk Kelso in the jaw. He was trying to cut them two loose. I had to load all three on Lodestone. He's some burro, that yaller feller. Them two was the ones who were planting evidence to cinch Padden, Abernathy, Sims and Myers. I sure been busy lately."

"Kirk Kelso!" wonders Magpie, out loud. We takes another look inside the cell, and then Magpie turns to Obie.

"If you're so danged free with your Light, old-timer, yuh might shed uh little light around here. Who in —— are you?"

Obie took another shot at his target and grinned.

"Me? I'm Spade Wilson."

"I-I-I was afraid of that," states uh voice at the cell door, and we observes the former detective hanging onto the bars. "No-nobody asked me if I was Spade Wilson. They—they told me I was and I-I didn't have the heart to deny it. I stayed too long, that's all. Yuh can't mix pleasure with b-b-business."

He stares at us for uh minute, and then slips out of sight.

"True as Gospel," agrees Spade Wilson, "If I knew where I could find some real cowmen I might buy uh drink."

"Cows is cows," squeaks Scenery Sims.

Digitized by Google

THE STRENGTH OF GREGSON

by Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "Koshinga," "Muchacho of Tumbling Water," etc.

"YOU'RE the man to fix the car? It's in here a little bit," said the tall stranger.

He jerked his head sideways toward the old swamp road.

Young Gregson looked at the motorist with a bashful but wondering grin which the indicated position of the stalled car fully justified. The road through the swamp was a short cut to Ford's Center; but in the Spring, what with the melting snow and seepage from the marshes, it was nothing but deep, black mud, crossed here and there by puddles of stagnant water.

"Must've got lost, Mr. Hazard," suggested Gregson.

His voice, which was just "changing," began away down in his chest and ended in an embarrassing squeak.

"Had an old route map," explained Hazard.

He had given that name when he phoned it to Amadore for a mechanician.

"Lucky we didn't get far before the breakdown. We'd better walk. You can run your machine in here, out of sight."

All the time, Hazard kept glancing sharply up and down the road. His thin, toneless voice sounded hurried. His sallow face wore an anxious look, and his close-set dark eyes were hard. But he smiled, and did his best to seem affable; and when Gregson had removed the tool kit from his motorcycle, Hazard himself trundled the machine behind a clump of alders.

It was done before Gregson could object, and for a moment he stood staring at a projecting handle-bar doubtfully. He was a slim, awkward, overgrown youth, loose-jointed and gawky and immature. He had an undeveloped chin, a fairly good forehead, and eyes that were habitually embarrassed.

Indeed, embarrassment fairly covered him, at this period of his life, like a garment. His hands were big and clumsy and his feet were in the way, and he was painfully conscious of the length of his throat and his limbs, and of the awkwardness of his stride. His life was full of little stratagems to conceal this. Thus at times he talked volubly when he really had nothing to say; but at other times was utterly unable to speak when he should, as at present.

For there was a good reason why that motorcycle should be left in the road. Before leaving Amadore he had phoned a certain girl living up the road a piece to meet him at the crossroads. She was to ride back with him to town where they were to attend a show together. If she were to come to the crossroads and find no sign of him. . . .

No; that wouldn't do at all!

A thought struck him. With a swift movement of his right foot he scraped an arrow-shaped mark in the mud, pointing into the swamp. They had used it before, and there was no doubt the girl would see and understand it. Hazard was already starting down the road, and Gregson followed and caught up with him.

It was a raw afternoon toward evening,

Digitized by Google

in a rather dismal-looking world. Behind them the fields were still brown from the Winter. Ahead and on either side lay a flat wilderness of sedge, coarse rush, low and dismal-looking shrubbery. A damp, cold wind blew in from the east, and seemed to set the whole landscape—the tall, rank grass, the stunted thicket, even the gloomy water-surfaces—shuddering in sympathy with the dying day.

But Gregson didn't notice any of this. He was filled with a sort of awe of the smart-looking, citified motorist. To cover this awe, he began to whistle. To cover it still further, he presently forced himself to speak.

"Been travelin'?"

"Yes."

"Heard about that train robbery last night?"

"No," said Hazard, with a show of interest. "What was it?"

"Well, 'twas the same as they had up near Sanilac two weeks ago," said Gregson. "Beats Almighty how they do it. The two of 'em came through the back door of the end car, and when they was through they went out of the same door, and wasn't never seen again. Not a hide or hair of 'em. And the train runnin' forty miles an hour all the time!"

"But that's impossible," said Hazard. "They couldn't have gotten off."

"But they did," insisted Gregson. His interest carried him out of himself, and he forgot his bashfulness. "It was just the same at Sanilac. They searched the train both places, before it'd even stopped. And that ain't all they've done. There's the banks at Lexington and Applegate and three or four others. And a couple o' post-offices, too. There ain't no mercy in 'em either—they've shot down three men stone dead."

"Good Lord!" cried Hazard. "And never been caught."

"They ain't hardly been *seen*. They get out o' the towns on foot, and then just go up in smoke. Roads all watched; it don't make no difference. They don't seem to go by the roads. But they don't walk, either, for there was them robberies at Lexington and Applegate. They was two hours apart, but it's eighty miles between the two towns by the road."

"They might have taken a train," said Hazard.

"There wasn't none they could take. If there was they might 'a' made it, because it's only sixty miles by the road. But there wasn't. It's darn funny."

"Maybe they use a flying machine, then."

That filled Gregson with ecstasy, for it was the same suggestion he himself had made, in his father's repair shop, and been ridiculed for making. So he drew Hazard out on the subject, intending to repeat later everything he said. All the time they were progressing into the swamp, walking with considerable difficulty. Their boots sank stickily into the mud with every step. They pulled them out with a distinct effort, and a sucking, gurgling sound. Immediately the semi-liquid mass settled back again, effacing their tracks completely.

Gregson wished now he had left a note asking the girl to wait for him on the highway. He had a very chivalric feeling concerning her comfort. Indeed, she was an extremely remarkable girl. And a week before something had happened between them—uncouth and awkward and all unworthy as he was—that still filled him with amazement. She had let him kiss her—and both knew that their lives were bound together from that moment clear to the sunset.

Presently the two—Gregson feeling quite at home with Hazard now—came to a little firmer ground, which still retained the deep tracks of an automobile. Gregson looked at them casually, and they seemed to catch and hold his attention. He studied them for an interval with slow curiosity.

"I thought there was something funny about them tracks," he suddenly cried, with a pleased air of discovery. "Closer together than standard, ain't they? A'most a foot."

"Eh?" Hazard roused himself from a spell of brooding. "Oh, yes. You're a good observer, my boy."

"And them?" inquired Gregson, pointing at the ground. "What's them?"

For the tracks were really double. Just outside each tire track was a flat-surfaced, shallow mark in the mud, with a deeper indentation along the outer edge of it. A mark that, if the contrivance that made it was attached to the wheel, would not have showed on an ordinarily solid road.

"Oh, that!"

For an infinitesimal space the stranger hesitated, seemed to be taken aback.

Digitized by Google

"I don't know. A cart that's gone this way, maybe. It's nothing to do with our machine."

Gregson looked again at the double tracks, so regular and equi-distanced, and then again at Hazard's face, with a curious, thoughtful, sideways squint. He was still glancing back and forth between the two, like a child trying to work out a puzzle, when the road dipped to a lower level, the mud thinned and deepened, and the tracks vanished.

"It's funny," he said, with a sort of sigh.

Hazard glanced at him sharply.

AND then they rounded a curve and came upon the disabled car, drawn up to one side of the road.

It was a two-passenger car of a semi-racing pattern, high-powered and painted a dull-slate color. By the side of it a second man slouched restlessly back and forth.

In a way, he was the complement of the cold-tempered Hazard. He was short and burly and red-faced, with scowling, impatient eyes. For all of his weight, he moved lightly, like a cat, and his arms swung heavy and powerful at his sides.

He shot a swift, inquiring look at Hazard. Hazard nodded almost imperceptibly, and then turned to Gregson.

"Wish you'd hurry things a bit," he said. "We want to get started."

Gregson was staring at the stout man rather stupidly, with his mouth a little open.

"I ain't heard what's the matter yet," he mumbled with an effort.

"What in —— you brought with you?" flashed the stout man at Hazard. "That's for you to find out," impatiently to Gregson. "Sometimes it goes, sometimes it stops. It's stalled half a dozen times since——"

From behind Gregson's back, Hazard scowled viciously at the speaker, and he checked himself.

"Better look her over for yourself," he concluded roughly.

Young Gregson's eyes widened during this exchange. His mouth opened still further, and, barring the fright in it, his face looked like an animated question mark. He seemed to try to speak, gave it up, and glanced furtively and wishfully back over the lonely road. Finally, as if under compulsion, he approached the car, and examined the gasoline tank.

When he drew back he found both men within arm's reach of him. The stout man's hand was in the right pocket of his overcoat, which bulged and sagged downward as if with a heavy weight. Gregson's eyes darted from one to the other. Hazard's face hadn't changed. The stout man's eyes had gone strangely opaque and expressionless. Both returned Gregson's look steadily.

"Nothing wrong there," said Gregson.

"Well," said Hazard coolly, "don't waste time."

"Say," the question popped out of Gregson's lips, as if something had exploded within him, "if this car's stalled on you half a dozen times, why didn't you take it to a repair shop?"

There was a momentary silence. The stout man's hand crept stealthily upward half out of his pocket, and something very evil peeped through the curtains of his eyes. But Hazard leaned toward him, touching his arm as though by accident, and said impatiently:

"We've been trying to fix it ourselves. But I don't see how that concerns you."

"Oh!" said Gregson, weakly.

He wavered where he stood, and then slowly turned back toward the car.

He got down under the frame, and automatically took out the spark plugs and began to clean them. He had no feeling of volition about the matter at all; he seemed to be working in a daze. In spite of the biting, frost-laden wind, in spite of the fact that his feet were soaked and his legs were pressed into the congealing mud, he fell into a sudden sweat. For now he knew the men for what they were. He knew, too, that they realized it, that they could not afford to let him escape with the knowledge, and that he worked under actual sentence of death.

After a while he backed out and said:

"There's something wrong with the magneto. I can't fix it with the tools I've got. I've got to go back for more."

The stout man glared at him furiously, but it was Hazard's cold and unwinking stare that completely undid Gregson. It seemed to strip the lie bare, to strip Gregson bare too, to show him in all his insignificance, weak and helpless. But all Hazard said was:

"I think you're wrong. I've had the same trouble before. I don't know what it

Digitized by Google

was, but all the man used to fix it was what I told you to bring. Better look again."

Gregson went back to his work filled with such fear as a trapped rabbit may be supposed to feel, a white-livered and brainless panic that did away even with the thought of resistance.

He quivered all over, but something without him seemed to hold his hands to their work. After he had cleaned the carbureter float, he tested the battery, and then took out the spark plug, turned the engine to make contact, and held the plug close to the body of the engine. There was no spark. And he knew that the fault was in the wire.

His swirling thoughts had begun to shape themselves. A gruesome vision floated before his eyes of a limp thing that had been himself being loaded into the car, probably bent double and jammed in behind the seat, and whirled off through the gathering night to a secret burial in some forsaken pool or boggy marsh. The picture fascinated him. It filled him with a vast and enervating self-pity. He felt every moment more helpless, a jelly-like thing seized in the grip of the inevitable.

He began to go over the wire inch by inch, and at last he found where the insulation had partly worn off against the cylinder casing, and the wire itself had broken. The ends of the wire were still held together by what remained of the insulation. Thus sometimes the connection would be completed and the car would run; sometimes the vibration of the car would open the break, and destroy the circuit. As, indeed, the words of the stout man had indicated.

Gregson, looking around secretly, was startled to meet Hazard's hard eyes through the spokes of the front wheel.

"You see, you've found it," said Hazard evenly.

And this watchfulness and perspicacity—so in keeping with the character of men who could terrorize a whole State—still further overawed Gregson.

He backed out and, without daring to look at either of the men, opened his tool kit.

He took out his gasoline torch and soldering outfit, and turned back to the car. As he did so, he happened to glance at the right front wheel. His senses must have been quickened by terror, for he saw something that recalled the curious tracks in the mud, and that set his mind groping down an entirely different road.

From each alternate spoke of the wheel a stout steel knob projected. These knobs were pierced for bolts. Where the heads and nuts of these bolts would come, they were worn bright, and there was no mud. It followed that when the car had entered the swamp, something had been bolted fast to each wheel, without doubt the same device that had left those tracks in the road.

And it came to Gregson that it must be this device, too, that converted the machine from an ordinary car into the instrument of hell's dexterities that enabled the men to do what they had done.

What was the contrivance? It was probably with an instinctive effort to preserve its sanity that his mind reacted to the problem. But he solved it too soon. It seemed so simple that at another time he would have smiled at the fact that no one had thought of it before. And then he felt himself sinking again into a pale mist of helplessness and terror.

He had stripped back the insulation and spliced the wires. He had ignited the gasoline torch and was raising it preparatory to soldering. And again he was working as in a trance, knowing that the end of his job meant also the end of his life, but held to it by the very fascination of fear, and by the dominance of a stronger mind.

And then a terrible thing happened!

FROM somewhere up the road, so far away and so faint that it was hardly audible, came the sound of a whistle. It was the signal of the girl young Gregson loved, and it told him she was coming.

The gasoline torch dropped sizzling into the mud. Gregson's face went white as paper. There was a startled movement behind him. Gregson's teeth gritted together as he forced himself to pick up the torch and go on with his work.

He had forgotten the girl. He had forgotten that his peril was her peril, too; that the arrow he had left in the mud pointed for her the way to death. Whether she met the men before or after he had died did not matter. If he was not with them, she would inquire for him; and the stout man's bludgeon would answer her.

Digitized by Google

He could not understand why he had not thought of her. He found himself overwhelmed with a great boyish shame. And that shame did him good. It was like a cleansing flood.

He wondered if he could shout a warning loud enough that she would hear it. He almost tried; but he choked the cry back in his throat. The girl—if he knew her courage—would hurry toward his voice instead of away from it. The men would drag him out by his feet and finish him out of hand. They would lie in wait for the girl; and then finish mending the break themselves, and drive away.

Indeed, the break was already mended. Nothing remained but to replace the insulation. The stout man's voice came from behind. It was hoarse with anger, as though he had been deliberately working himself into a passion.

"Come, hurry up there! What you doing?"

"I'm doin' my best," Gregson replied meekly.

But for all that he paltered. He examined the other wires, and fumbled about in the mechanism aimlessly. All the time his mind was working at racing speed—what to do, how to save her? There seemed nothing in the world but this problem. His own danger had retreated to the background of his mind, vanished in perspective to a pin-point.

Suddenly, with a movement as swift as the thought that impelled it, he thrust his hand forward the full length of his arm, and turned the pet-cock of the gasoline tank.

Instantly he was back at work. He had twisted around now so that, out of the corner of his eye, he could see the legs and hands and lower part of the trunks of the two men. Not the slightest movement of their fingers escaped him. He called back over his shoulder in a nearly normal voice—

"It'll be finished in a minute!"

The gasoline, trickling out of the tank, nearly stifled him with its vapor. It made a little pool in the mud, and a tiny rivulet of it broke away and ran back under the car. But Gregson's body was interposed between it and the men, and the freshening wind blew the fumes away from them.

An intent look came into Gregson's eyes. He cocked his head sideways, and listened attentively. He heard the soft pat-patting of footsteps, the faintest possible splashing and gurgling of water and mud—and he knew that in another minute the men would hear it too.

He picked up his unlit torch, and looked from it to the pool of gasoline, and back toward the two watchful men.

"I've got it fixed," he said steadily. "D'you want to look at it?"

He drew back a little and waited, with his body as tense as a coiled spring.

The men hesitated. Gregson could not see their faces, but in some subtle way he was aware of the meaning glance that passed between them. Then the burly man started forward.

Gregson's head was half-turned. His body, still bent under the frame of the car, quivered a little as his enemy came up. He edged aside to make room, and the stout man bent over. And he got a whiff of the escaping gasoline.

With an inarticulate roar of rage, he dove forward and down underneath the car.

"What the devil you been doing?" he rasped menacingly.

In the flicker of an eyelid, he discovered the answer to his own question. Gregson had let the life fluid out of the car, disabling it. The stout man suspected no worse than that, then. But with a face turned murderous, he fished a six-inch iron bar out of his pocket, and squirmed around to get at Gregson.

But Gregson was no longer there. The moment the stout man cried out, Gregson had leaped backward. Hazard sprang toward him with an oath, whipping out a revolver; but Gregson evaded him with a sideways twist, and whirled facing the car. A bluish-white flame had suddenly crowned the end of his torch.

The stout man, as though suddenly realizing a hideous danger, was scrambling frantically backward from beneath the car. His head cleared the frame of it, and he was just turning when Gregson flung the torch.

Flame seemed to leap from the car toward it. Instantly it became a blinding white sheet of fire that filled the world. Gregson saw the stout man, who had started to run, caught up in that explosive flame, and flung forward ten feet, where he lay quietly on his face. His own skin was blistered by the heat. A bullet from Hazard's revolver passed through his hat, and carried it away.

Digitized by Google

Gregson, reeling a little from the blast, turned upon Hazard and grappled with him. He managed to get hold of Hazard's pistol arm, and thrust it up. But Hazard tripped and threw him. He was much heavier than Gregson, and he held him there on his back. Gregson managed to hold on to Hazard's right wrist; but Hazard pinned Gregson's other arm somehow with his body and shoulder, and his left hand crept up to Gregson's throat.

But just then Gregson caught a glimpse of the girl's head over Hazard's shoulder. Her face was white and terrified, but her lips were tightly compressed. The bludgeon she held in her hand was the same the stout man had carried; and she brought it down twice, with well-calculated stunning force, on his confederate's head.

OF THE two, Hazard was the first to recover consciousness. He found himself tightly bound with stout strips torn from his own overcoat; he looked over and saw that the stout man had been treated the same; and he saw the wrecked car burning fiercely, like his own funeral pyre.

"Well, you've beat me," he said, looking up into a face that was boyish still, but across which had been carved some new lines of strength.

"'Twasn't me," said Gregson; "'twas Mary. She's gone after the constable. And now," with a touch of youthful anger, "you might tell me where you've hid them extra iron rims of yours, that lets you skite across country on the railroad track, and hold up trains and rob people as you like."

NIGHT HERDING

by IRA SOUTH

The drowsy moon, night guarding, rides the sky,
  Around the bedded herds of stars,
And sometimes seems to come upon the wind
  A snatch of song, faint broken bars.

Coyotes sharp their eerie rising wail.
  —Heigh-oh, there, doggies, bed down, don't stray.
I wonder if the moon has cattle songs
  Like me to pass the night away?

I've sung my string of rider tunes to end,
  Resung the best ones through again,
The melancholy minor prairie airs
  In time to slapping bridle rein.

I wish I knew the songs the night winds bring,
  Refrains which calm the stars in sleep,
The cattle calls and lays of circling moon,
  To pass the long, long watch we keep.

Digitized by Google

A BEARER OF BELTS

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Kinnikinnick."

Author's Note

THE five tribes composing the Iroquois Confederacy, or League of Five Nations, dwelt in upper New York. The Mohawks, the best boatmen in North America, held the river bearing their name, their villages extending from what is now Schenectady to Utica, their territory embracing Lake George and Lake Champlain. They were insolent and warlike and were almost exterminated more than once. Firearms furnished by the Dutch traders at Albany permitted them, together with their four allies, to play the conquéror from Hudson Bay to the Tennessee, from the Kennebec to the Mississippi.

They were most prominent of all the Iroquoian tribes in the early Indian wars because of their exposed position on the eastern frontier; and their name was a synonym for the League throughout New England. They called themselves Caniengas, or Kaniengehaga, "people of the place of flint."

Next to them lived the Oneida on the lake and river bearing their name. The Oneida was the conservative member of the League and, like the Mohawk, had only three clans. The "imperious" Onondagas came next, possessing the lakes Onondaga and Skaneateles and the Oswego River to Lake Ontario. They were considered to be the ruling spirit of the League. They, together with the Mohawk and the Seneca, formed the tribal phratry of "The Three Elder Brothers" in the federal assemblies.

In the federal council, however, they formed a tribal phratry alone, the Mohawk and Seneca forming the second, the Oneida and Cayuga, the third. The Onondaga phratry served as a judge in all issues presented to the council by the other two, and could confirm the common opinion of the other two, or one of the differing opinions, thus making it the decree of the council, or could reject differing opinions, and suggest a compromise.

Their chief town was Onondaga on the lake of that name, where burned the Great Council Fire of the League. Being the seat of federal power it was, perhaps, the most important and most widely known of any Indian town north of Mexico. The Cayuga possessed the lake of that name, their local council, it is said, being used as a pattern in the formation of the League. At the beginning of the American Revolution the major portion of the tribe removed to Canada, never to return, the remainder being scattered among their allies.

On the west lived the Seneca, whose council-fires, when first known, were at Tsonotowan, near Naples, Ontario County. Their functions at the federal council were similar to those of the modern sergeant-at-arms and also included many of the duties of a modern secretary of state in dealing with foreign affairs. In addition they were the warders of "The Great Black Doorway." Anciently they were the most populous of the five tribes.

The Tuscaroras joined the League in 1722, having been at one time the most powerful nation in North Carolina. Their defeat by the English in 1714-1715 drove them to seek sanctuary with the League, hundreds of their number having been sold into slavery in the South and in Pennsylvania. An advertisement, offering some of them for sale, appeared in the *Boston News Letter* in 1713. After their coming the League was sometimes known as the Six Nations.

At the outbreak of the Revolution the greater part of the Oneida and a half of the Tuscarora took sides with the colonists, the remainder throwing their lot in with the British. The League's hatred of the French dated back many years to the time Champlain aided an expedition of Canadian Indians against the League. The League was broken up by General Sullivan's expedition.

In war the Iroquois were ferocious, in statecraft astute, in military prowess remarkable; among their own they were kindly and affectionate. They depended upon agriculture rather than on the chase. They waged war to perpetuate their political life and independence. The basic purpose of their League was to secure universal peace. The Chippewa checked their western advance; the Catawba and Cherokee stopped their thrust to the south, while the French held them back on the north.—

H. P.

Digitized by Google

IS THAT the Bear Clan's long-drawn Death halloo?
Where is the Warder of the Black Doorway?
Deep is your forest mold, Chittenango.
Seneca and Oneida, where are they?

Koue-e-e! for the Bearer of Belts.
Koue-e-e! for the Clan of the Bear.
Bones and red wampum in the dark forest mold?
Then the answer is written there.

FOR some time Bainbridge remained irresolute on the silent bank of the Chenango. His plan had been definite enough had he found the disaffected Oneidas. In that event he either would have lost his life hideously, or else have induced them to return to their people, now pressed by the Mohawks back toward Schenectady because of their loyalty to the Americans.

The breaking away of a portion of the Bear clan held grave dangers for the settlements in the Chenango and Otsego valleys. Not because of the number of warriors it might immediately add to the hostile league so much as the influence of their example on the bulk of the Oneidas who had turned to make war against their former allies in behalf of the Colonials.

Bainbridge had been selected for the scout because of his familiarity with the country and his knowledge of the Indian character. Too often had American leaders ignored or disdained the latter. Bainbridge knew the disaffection of Dancing Bear and his followers was like a tiny crevice in a sand-bank when the stream is full; insignificant today but becoming a disastrous breach on the morrow. Today loyal Oneidas were harshly condemning Dancing Bear for his withdrawal. Another sun might find many of his censors following him, having discarded their allegiance to the American cause.

Bainbridge had expected to overtake the refractory body at the Chenango and was prepared to make an impassioned appeal that would either win them back or send him to the torture. Now the dead ashes of their camp-fires told him the band had moved on within the last forty-eight hours, doubtless making for Oneida Lake, where by this time they were rekindling the ancient council-fires of their people. He feared the fiery Dancing Bear had won them over to warring against the settlers.

The scout could persist in following them, rather a forlorn hope, or return down the valley and report failure. To advance redoubled the chances that his services would be forever lost to the colonies. To confess defeat was humiliating. Finally he compromised; he would scout the country ahead and learn if the "neutrals" had as yet come in contact with the Onondagas. Taking a course between their trail and the beginning of the Onondaga country he moved swiftly through the towering growth.

Ever since they had obtained firearms from the first Dutch traders at Orange (Albany) the Iroquois had been supreme among the red men east of the Mississippi. Their raids had forced subjection on the New England tribes, had carried defeat to the distant Illinois, had not overlooked the powerful Cherokees on the Tennessee, nor the Catawbas in South Carolina.

Whether Adirondack or Huron, Southern or Western tribes, the confederacy had subjugated, dispersed or exterminated the Eastern nations. Their allegiance, more than any one other single cause, had forced the fate of the Canadas. Foreign potentates eagerly bid for their friendship and anxiously awaited their decision. No wonder then, that in this, the land of their council-fires, the very air was tainted with their prowess, while the noble forests exhaled warnings to every intruder.

Bainbridge was fully alive to the risk dogging his venture. His chances of capture increased by geometrical progression with every rod of his advance through the gigantic pines. Hence his progress was slow, the crossing of a stream, when for a minute he would be without cover, consuming hours. Up to his arrival at a shallow creek his movements had been governed by habitual caution. Suddenly, without any tangible reason, instinct compelled him to conceal himself. Without analyzing his abrupt conclusions he was overwhelmed by the belief the opposite shore contained a vital danger.

With the red man's persistent patience he waited till the shadows of the western trees fell across the water and left it black. In another hour it would be dusk and he could risk crossing. Then without a sound to herald his coming an Indian emerged on the opposite bank and plunged into the creek. He was naked except for clout and moccasins and the belt holding his war-ax.

As he waded the shallows Bainbridge raised his long rifle, then placed it aside and

Digitized by Google

drew his ax, a puzzled look creeping into his eyes. He believed the savage to be an Oneida. He knew he had been running to the point of exhaustion, while a red welt on his bronzed left arm still oozed blood.

He gained the bank near Bainbridge's position and used only his right hand in pulling himself ashore. The left arm was broken. Stepping from cover and speaking in the Oneida tongue Bainbridge greeted—

"My brother is hurt."

The Indian was badly startled and his right hand dropped to his belt. Bainbridge had inventoried him with the sharp, discerning glance of the border-bred, and before the hand could pluck forth the ax he whipped forward his own weapon and extended it, handle first, saying:

"Take mine. It is keen."

Studying him suspiciously, unable to decide from the nondescript forest garb whether the white man was Tory or Colonial, the Indian slowly replied—

"My white brother may keep his ax and cut me a sapling that I may lean upon it."

"You are of the Oneidas. You are my friend. You shall lean on me," said Bainbridge, sliding a supporting hand under the Indian's right arm. "We will rest while I fix my brother's arm."

"The white man's manito is mighty," muttered the savage.

DANGER was in the breeze flowing over the creek. Peril lurked along the wounded Oneida's trail. That he had no weapon except his ax was eloquent proof of his great haste. He had fled from something which even now might be at his heels. He showed no desire to be off, however. Bainbridge knew it would be futile to question him as he would have questioned a white man.

Betraying none of his impatience he proceeded with effective, if rude, surgery to set the broken bones and fasten them firmly in place with splints. During the operation the patient sat motionless and silent but his face was streaked with sweat when the scout rose from adjusting the last bandage of rawhide.

"Some one tried to stop my brother from walking through the forest," politely observed Bainbridge.

"I killed a cat," was the grim reply.

Bainbridge's ears burned with curiosity. The man was an Oneida, although he wore nothing to distinguish his tribe. The scout believed him to be one of Dancing Bear's people, who had fled, unwilling to war on the settlers. But in stating he had killed a cat he had spoken figuratively.

Had he actually encountered a panther, or stumbled upon a lynx, he would show signs of mauling. His arm had been broken by a blow from some blunt instrument, such as a war-club. His words were portentous if the scout's ready interpretation was correct.

"Why did you not take his scalp?" asked Bainbridge.

"*Nadowa!*" hissed the Oneida, using the Algonquian term expressing utter detestation. "His fur would never be prime."

This satisfied Bainbridge his patient had fought and conquered one of his pursuers, who was a member of the fierce Cat Nation, an Erie. For years the Eries had been deadly foes to the Iroquois, or until they were conquered and many of them were adopted by the victors.

If his reasoning were correct the scout knew he had startling news to carry down the Chenango. For the Eries dwelt with the Senecas, who held the country beyond the Onondagas and Cayugas. If the Oneida had left a dead Erie back on his trail it meant his masters, the Senecas, had joined the Onondagas for some vast and bloody project.

The wounded warrior continued his sharp scrutiny of the scout. Bainbridge appreciated his indecision and decided on a bold stroke, one entirely at right angles with the aboriginal desire to avoid directness. He said:

"My brother asks himself if I be for or against the Redcoats. I am against them. I have scouted for Morgan."

For fully a minute the warrior pondered over this frank admission; then replied—

"My brother has used his medicine for the Oneida, Little Wolf, of the Wolf Clan."

Bainbridge bowed and waited. To ply him with questions would be useless. After another pause the Oneida continued:

"The Onondaga council-fires burn high. They cook meat for the Keepers of the Great Black Doorway."

"Huh!" exclaimed Bainbridge; for the Senecas were warders of the Great Black Doorway of the league.

"The waters of the Chenango will be red

Digitized by Google

as the leaves of the trees under a heavy frost. They send out runners."

"A big raid. They're calling in their allies," muttered Bainbridge, his brows contracting because of the misery and suffering his vision called up.

How the Oneida could have ventured into the stronghold of the Onondagas and obtained this information was a matter of minor curiosity now. The scout was deciding he must leave the Indian to follow as best he could while he hastened on ahead to warn the settlements. The next words of Little Wolf caused his legs to twitch nervously with an excited desire to be up and off, not for the settlements this time, but on the trail of Dancing Bear's band. For the Oneida added—

"They send belts."

The Oneidas alone had refused to remain in the confederacy and wage war against the Americans. Belts would be sent only to those outside the federation. And there was but one band of disaffected Oneidas to be reached from the council-fires of the imperious Onondagas. In the space of a second all things became clear to Bainbridge and permitted him to change his mind as to the necessity of hurrying back to the settlements.

There was a gathering of a mighty force which would wait for an answer to the belts now being sent to the malcontents. Dancing Bear had virtually closed his bargain with the league, else, he never would have ventured back to the home of his people. The belts, inviting him to join in the war, constituted a ceremony which would flatter his pride.

The war party in the secluded Onondaga Valley could afford to wait a few days if the delay brought them these new allies. Bainbridge shrugged his shoulders to shake off the chill as he saw his duty pointing the way to the lodges of the Oneidas who were waiting for the bearer of the belts.

"My brother, Little Wolf of the Wolf Clan, knows the trail down the valley. My brother will take his white brother's message to the fort in the first settlement."

As he spoke he peeled a strip of bark from a white-birch tree and with a charred stick wrote a few words on the smooth side, warning the commander of the blockhouse that the Red Peril was about to break loose again.

Little Wolf thrust the roll of bark inside his clout and asked—

"My brother does not go down the valley?"

"I go to find the bearer of the belts," was the simple reply.

A flicker of admiration shone in the Oneida's gaze as he grasped the other's bold purpose. Its audacity appealed to his nature, and touching his wounded arm he regretted:

"My brother should not follow the trail alone if I had two arms. I will deliver the message. The belt bearer starts tonight for Dancing Bear's camp on the Oneida. With the rising of tomorrow's sun he should be crossing the Chittenango. It is there my brother should find him."

"The Oneidas are waiting for him?"

"They are waiting for him."

Then unable to suppress a recital of his own recent hardihood longer he struck his breast with his right hand, as though counting a coup, and proudly proclaimed:

"I, Little Wolf of the Wolf Clan, sat at their council-fires and drank in their words. They believed I was one of Dancing Bear's warriors. I heard their plans and left them. But an Erie tree-cat—" and he paused to spit aside—"suspected something. Instead of telling his masters he followed me. He is following a longer trail now."

"It is well," grunted Bainbridge, picking up his rifle and plunging into the forest.

NOW and then a small clearing, made by the Oneidas in the days of their allegiance to the league, furnished patches of sunshine to relieve the somber shadows of the ancient wood bordering Chittenango Creek. But Bainbridge in following the western bank denied himself the warm sunshine that he might keep to the edge of the old growth where the traveling was freer and the range of vision wider. He sought a trail from the west that cut across the creek and joined the ancient trail on the opposite bank.

It was an hour after sunrise when he stole to the water to examine a line of stepping stones, and he was electrified into a mingling of hope and fear as he beheld a wet splash on the side of a rock in mid-stream. No fish had splashed the rock, he instantly decided. It was more as though an incautious foot had slipped into the water and had left the smear on being withdrawn. And the trace was very fresh.

Digitized by Google

Rapidly following the bank north he risked crossing to the other side, for the success of his venture, and possibly his own fate, depended on his getting ahead of the belt bearer. Pausing only to freshen the priming of his rifle he commenced a minute examination of the ground which was continued till he reached the old trail of the Oneidas. This was worn half a foot deep and packed hard by countless feet.

The belt bearer would not expect to be intercepted and as his errand demanded great haste he would be likely to keep to the trail. Kneeling beside the deep path Bainbridge stared intently at every bit of forest mold and twig and found nothing. Not satisfied he glided toward the lake till he struck a spot where the trail passed through a small melon garden, now grown up to weeds and grass.

Here he repeated his investigations. Grass beaded with dew, flat rocks covered with wet moss, and last year's leaves of birch and beech came under his scrutiny. He straightened on his knees and drew a deep breath of relief. He was convinced no foot had trod the trail within twenty-four hours. He was ahead of the belt-bearer.

He turned back to meet his quarry under the somber pines. The absence of underbrush afforded him an advantage and a handicap. It permitted his gaze to range the woods for a considerable distance but allowed his own presence to be as easily detected. Yet he had scant fear of being discovered by the messenger, who would be hastening to finish his errand, suspicious of no danger. There was, however, a great danger of scouts from the Oneida encampment stealing upon him from the rear, for he could not divide his attention.

Keeping his gaze on the trail to the south he pressed on, pausing every few rods to examine the lofty aisles in the hope of detecting some motion. After half an hour of this nerve-straining work he began to worry. The messenger had crossed the creek ahead of him and should have moved diligently. He would not have been surprised had he found he was behind the emissary. Instead he had cut in ahead of him. But why did he not show up? A sudden fear gripped his heart that the belt-bearer had scented danger and had cut across the trail to strike the lake in a half-circle.

Realizing it was make or break and that he must overtake the bearer at all hazards he disregarded much of his caution and hurried down the trail always seeking for the signs of some one crossing it. After a mile of such endeavor he came to a spot almost in line with the water-splashed rock in the creek. He believed the pine-needles had been disturbed recently at this point.

The signs were almost imperceptible and he formed his judgment largely from instinct. Quitting the trail he turned due east, and inside of the first fifty feet he was on his knees, his face pressed close to the smooth, barkless top of a mighty root, that he might study a small dark stain.

It was blood, and his lips drew back in a snarl of bewilderment. If the belt-bearer were wounded why had he not called for help, knowing Dancing Bear's outposts would quickly swarm to his succor? If wounded why waste strength in making the detour? Puzzles happened upon in the Iroquois forest must be solved and not left to spring up behind one as a nemesis. The all-important mission of overtaking the belt-bearer was now complicated by the tiny brown smear on the tree root.

He swept on till a lessening of the gloom ahead bespoke an opening. Hoping to find more signs in this more fertile ground Bainbridge quickened his pace only to sink noiselessly behind a clump of gray birch at the edge of the opening. It was scarcely more than a pocket, a well in the heart of the forest, but the scout found it a vital focal point of his shrewdest attention. For he sensed life almost within arm's reach.

The uneasy leaves of the birch quivered and trembled, and mingled with their soft rustling was another note, almost inaudible yet registering acutely on the scout's trained ears. It was a low scraping sound and yet not like that made by a bush grinding and rasping against another. Nor was there any breeze in this hole of an opening to agitate the undergrowth.

Laying aside his rifle and holding his ax in his right hand he wormed his way forward. Another dozen feet and he caught the low breathing of something just beyond the next fringe of bushes.

The low rasping note became harsher, and to its accompaniment Bainbridge covered the remaining few feet and peered through the bush screen. The first object to meet his gaze filled him with fierce delight. It was a belt of wampum hung on

Digitized by Google

a low bough. Its white strings were tinged red with vermilion, as befitting a belt which invited friends to join in a war. The scraping noise remained to be understood.

Twisting his head the scout's gaze fell on the belt-bearer seated cross-legged and working industriously over something before him. A further exertion and Bainbridge was gaping in amazement at the bearer's audacity and ruthless violation of his high office. The man was a Seneca and he was stretching a fresh scalp over a withe of willow which he had bent into a hoop; and the scalp had grown on an Oneida head.

Sent with powers of ambassador to treat with Dancing Bear and win an allegiance already half promised he had encountered an outpost of the Oneidas, who must have welcomed him gladly, knowing his errand. Then the blood lust had filled his eyes, and, believing the profanation of his office would never be discovered, he had slain. Now he had stolen aside to mount his trophy and would conceal it while he continued to the lake and completed his business with Dancing Bear. It was an act more characteristic of the evil Eries than of a warder of The Great Black Doorway.

Bainbridge's eyes glowed with ferocious triumph as he realized the bearer's blood-guilt had given him his great chance. He leaped forward and clutched the warrior by the throat.

DANCING BEAR, freshly shaved and oiled and painted for war, held his gaze fixed on the old trail that he might be the first to behold the messenger who for some inexplicable reason did not come. The Onondagas knew he was ready to join with them in their next foray, but he had insisted he be treated with as though leader of an entire people.

A runner had informed him he was to be thus dignified and that the war-belt would be delivered him on this particular morning. An irritation was growing up in his soul because the bearer had not arrived. Each additional minute of delay detracted that much from the esteem in which the Onondagas professed to hold him and his little band.

A quiver of astonishment shook his tall figure, followed by an inarticulate cry of rage as the fierce, exultant scalp-cry of the Senecas rang out in the forest down the trail. Before the triumphant yell had died away the chief stood alone, his warriors having taken to cover, believing they had been decoyed thither that they might be treacherously slaughtered. Again came the taunting call, this time fainter, and at the chief's furious gesture a scout of his younger warriors glided forward to investigate.

The minutes passed with Dancing Bear growing more bewildered and infuriated at the indignity put upon him. Then one of his men, deep in the woods, screamed in rage. The clamor was picked up by the other scouts till the forest resounded with the chorus of hate. Dancing Bear threw aside his blanket and led the remainder of his men forward to learn the truth.

It was as incredible as it was monstrous, but not to be denied. Pinned to a pine beside the trail, and pinned by a Seneca knife, was the reeking scalp of the Oneida brave who had been missing since the night before, and whose gory scalp-lock had left the tiny stain for Bainbridge to discover. As the chief stared at this proof of rankest treachery he heard far off a mocking defiance, followed by a long-drawn scalp-halloo. Dancing Bear of the proud Bear Clan had not even been considered worthy of a war-party's attention, but had been flouted by a snake of a Seneca.

And meanwhile Bainbridge, fervently praying the body of the dead belt-bearer would remain concealed where he had hidden it, sped down the Chittenango and made for the Chenango Valley.

Twenty-four hours later there was much unrest about the council-fires of the Onondagas. The warriors of the recently arrived Senecas felt additional concern because it was one of their number that had been selected through courtesy to carry the war-belt. The finding of an Erie, dead but not scalped, complicated the situation. And concealing their impatience at the delay the fires were replenished and the war-party waited for the bearer to return with Dancing Bear and his band.

A delay of twenty-four hours and Bainbridge had left the Chenango for the Otsego. Another twenty-four hours and the Autumn forest spewed forth its red raiders and German Flats was burned, but its people, with the exception of two, had had time to escape.

Digitized by Google

HIRA SINGH'S TALE

A four-part story by Talbot Mundy

Part III.

Author of "The Soul of a Regiment," "The Damned Old Nigger," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

HEAR my tale, sahib.

We were the first of all the Indian regiments to ride out of Delhi and sail for the French front. That was an honor. But we hung our heads in shame, for Ranjoor Singh, our Sikh major, was not with us. We remembered that he spoke German fluently. Many said he had turned traitor.

I, Hira Singh, was a non-commissioned officer and I of but a few still had faith in Ranjoor Singh. I was not pleased when Gooja Singh of my same rank remarked:

"Let us hope he may die like a rat and bring no more shame on us."

The day came when we reached France and the fighting lines. It was just as we were awaiting the command for our first charge that I turned and heard our English colonel exclaim:

"Ranjoor Singh! Thank God, old man! You've come in the nick of time!"

So I was right. He was with us before the blood ran.

That was a night of nights, sahib. We rode behind Ranjoor Singh into the Germans as wind cuts into a forest. That one set-back checked their advance along the whole line. What are color and creed? We Sikhs be men, with the hearts of men; and that night we knew that our hearts and those of the British were one. But be attentive, sahib; my story is of Ranjoor Singh and what he did.

The days in the trenches dragged on. We learned that Ranjoor Singh had stayed behind in India to expose a German plot. Yet a new distrust of him arose. He talked with the Germans across the trenches. Gooja Singh led the grumbling—a dangerous man.

Then one evening we were ordered to charge again. When dawn came we were completely surrounded. Our English colonel was sorely wounded. Just before he died I heard him say to Ranjoor Singh:

"You're in command now. Shepherd 'em. Good-by, old friend."

For days of misery and hunger we stood the Germans off. To fight our way back to the British lines was death. It had not entered the hearts of any of us to surrender, yet it was the only way. And when Ranjoor Singh bade us lay down our rifles, I hated him in that minute.

When we reached the German trench two hundred and three and fifty of us, including wounded, were left alive. Ranjoor Singh was led apart. The rest of us were led to the rear lines and then herded into cattle trucks. For five days we traveled and then we were placed in a prison camp.

Week after week passed. German officers told us that Ranjoor Singh was working with them in Berlin. I still believed in him; the rest cursed him as unfaithful. They asked that he be brought to them. Secretly they said if he talked treason they would tear him limb from limb.

Ranjoor Singh came clothed in a new German uniform. But as we looked in his face we knew that he understood things which we did not, and much of our distrust of him vanished for the time being.

"I know the thoughts ye think," said he. "I will give you a real thought. This is a regiment. I am its last surviving officer. As major of this regiment I have accepted a certain offer made in Berlin and as its major I now command your obedience. The Germans have a plan. Mark well my orders. Listen to it and pretend to agree. Then shall you be given weapons. Then you shall leave this camp within a week."

Presently came the Germans to us and offered us the alternative of working in the coal-mines or fighting for the Central Powers. Many of the regiment thought that Ranjoor Singh had led us into a trap.

Digitized by Google

There was much grumbling. I asked to see Ranjoor Singh.

"If we sign an oath of allegiance to Germany," said I, "how do we know they will not bring it to the notice of the British?"

"If they chained us and we broke the chains, they might send the broken links to London in proof of what thieves we be," replied Ranjoor Singh. "I intend to sign whatever the Germans ask."

So we all signed as we were bid and each was given a rifle. But my heart warned me that the Germans would not trust a regiment seduced as we were supposed to have been.

Next day we were marched to the railroad station. Some of our wounded had died and we numbered two hundred and five and thirty. So we entrained and for days we traveled we knew not whither.

A German sergeant—Fritz Tugendheim—came aboard. He had lived in India.

"Beware of him," whispered Ranjoor Singh.

At last I found that we were on the way to Constantinople. When I told the men, the majority decided we were to be sent to Gallipoli to fight beside the Turks. Once there, said they all, it should be easy to cross to the British trenches under cover of darkness.

"We will take Ranjoor Singh with us," they said darkly. For they continued to distrust his motives.

After we arrived in Stamboul—or Constantinople as Europeans call it—Ranjoor Singh came to us with Tugendheim at his heels.

"The plan is to keep us here a week," said he. "After that to send us to Gallipoli by steamer."

But I never could have guessed how Ranjoor Singh would lead us out of the trap. Can the sahib guess?

Ranjoor Singh spent much time with German officers poring over maps and talking. I went to speak with him as often as I could invent excuse and I heard the word *Wassmuss* used very frequently. I wondered what it could mean.

Next day we were given a full month's pay.

In the pitch dark we were marched aboard a steamer. Tugendheim and the Turkish captain and mate were all to guard us, but a regiment of Kurds was coming aboard later.

Ranjoor Singh called me aside.

"Pick the four most dependable men," he ordered, "and bid them enter the cabin and gag and bind Tugendheim."

I saw that the deed was accomplished, not letting the men know from whom came the orders. I feared they might not obey. Following out Ranjoor Singh's orders again in the same manner I collected the money the men had been paid by the Germans and handed it over to our leader. Then our ship began to move out slowly into the darkness without lights or sounding whistle. Does the sahib remember whether the passage from Stamboul into the Sea of Marmora runs south or east or west? Neither could I remember. Nor can I remember how many hours we steamed from Stamboul.

The ship's hold was filled with cartridges. Two hundred rounds were distributed to every man. Twenty more boxes were laid aside to be taken with us when we landed. The voyage was ended before dawn. Ranjoor Singh was the last man to leave the ship.

"Where are we?" asked a trooper.

"Ye stand on Asia," answered Ranjoor Singh.

"Why let the Turks have the steamer?" asked Gooja Singh suspiciously. "They will send signals. Then will come the Turks and Germans."

"Nay," replied Ranjoor Singh, "I, myself, sank the steamer. I let the sea into her hold. I bribed the captain and mate and have a written receipt showing the purpose for which the money was paid. Ye are as good as dead men. The Turks, to save their own skins, will swear they saw us drown. Who then will come and hunt for dead men?"

"Why did you not take us to Gallipoli?" called out Gooja Singh.

"Partly from lack of coal," answered Ranjoor Singh. "It was because of this that the Germans trusted us alone on aboard. We need food and discipline. Never was a regiment more fiercely disciplined than this shall be. The man who as much as thinks of disobedience plays with death."

Then Ranjoor Singh showed Tugendheim the paper signed by the Turkish captain and mate and said:

"Those two Turks understood that you were to be asked to sign as well. If there is any mishap they intend to lay the blame on you. But it is to their interest as much as yours to keep us from being captured."

Tugendheim signed and Ranjoor Singh went on:

"Now you will help us reach *Wassmuss*. On the day we reach our goal this paper shall be given back to you. You will collect your share of the bribe from the Turkish captain."

There came more dissension among the men. Gooja Singh, as usual, was at the bottom of it.

"Tell Ranjoor Singh he must lead us toward Gallipoli," was the message they gave me.

"To try to reach Gallipoli would be as wise as to try to reach Berlin," said Ranjoor Singh. "Both shores are held by Turkish troops. We found the one spot where it was possible to slip through undetected." Then in sharp tones, "Form fours—by the right—quick march!"

So we marched through the rain, following the telegraph lines rendered useless by the storm.

Hunger! We met hunger day after day for eight days. We avoided towns and all large villages. Ranjoor Singh did his best to make us husband our stale loaves but we ate the last of them and became like famished wolves. We had to nurse and bandage our feet as best we could, and march—march—march. Ranjoor Singh had a definite plan, for he led us unhesitatingly, but he would not tell us the plan. Most of the time he kept Tugendheim marching beside him.

On the eighth day we saw a citadel perched on a hill.

"That," said Ranjoor Singh examining his map, "is Angora. We will eat to-night. Lie down and sleep till I summon you."

He called me to his side and pointed to a column of men moving toward the city.

"They will not reach Angora before night. They will camp out there," he said. I went and lay down and fell asleep wondering.

When he roused me it was dark. We marched on and stole upon the camp—there were about fifty Turkish soldiers and also several Syrians who were forced to drive carts—much as they hated the Turks. We surrounded the camp and when the Turks saw how they were outnumbered they surrendered. Then blessed food for us and we were new men.

We packed all the food we could carry into the Turks' carts and with our disarmed prisoners ahead marched on.

Digitized by Google

Now among the Syrians was a man named Abraham, an educated man who spoke many languages and hated both Turks and Germans. Ranjoor Singh made good use of Abraham. Without Abraham I do not know what he would have done. Yet he would have found a way. He is a true man and God puts thoughts into his heart.

Ranjoor Singh knew that the German officers in Angora would wonder why the Turks we had captured did not arrive. So he called Tugendheim and dictated to him a letter in German to the effect that these Turks had been diverted to the aid of *Wassmuss*. At the foot of the letter Abraham cleverly copied the signature of a very high German officer. This officer's name was on documents in the possession of our captured Turkish officer. Then Abraham changed clothes with one of the Turks and started for Angora with the letter. He would join us later on.

CHAPTER VI

Where the weakest joint is, smite!—*Ranjoor Singh.*

WELL, sahib, Abraham caught up with us on the evening of the third day after leaving with that letter to the Germans in Angora, having ridden moderately to spare his horse. He said there were only two German officers there when he reached the place, and they seemed worried. They gave him the new saddle asked for, and a new horse under it; also a letter to carry back. Ranjoor Singh gave me the horse and saddle, letting Abraham take my sorry beast, that was beginning to recover somewhat under better treatment.

Ranjoor Singh smiled grimly as he read the letter. He translated parts of it to me—mainly complaints about lack of this and that and the other thing, and very grave complaints against the Turks, who it seemed would not cooperate. You would say that was good news to all of us, that should have inspired us with new spirit. But as I said in the beginning, sahib, there are reasons why the British must rule India yet a while. We Sikhs, who would rule it otherwise, are all divided.

We were seven non-commissioned officers. If we seven had stood united behind Ranjoor Singh there was nothing we could not have done, for the men would then have had no example of disunity.

You may say that Ranjoor Singh was our rightful officer and we had only to obey him, but I tell you, sahib, obedience that is worth anything must come from the heart and understanding. Ranjoor Singh was as much dependent on good-will as if we had had the choosing of him. So he had to create it, and that which has once been lost, for whatever reason, is doubly and redoubly hard to make again. He did what he did in spite of us, although I tried to help.

Of us seven, first in seniority came I; and as I have tried already to make clear I was Ranjoor Singh's man—not that he believed it altogether yet. If he had ordered me to make black white I would have perished in the effort to obey, but I had yet to prove that.

Next in order to me was Gooja Singh, and although I have spared the regiment's shame as much as possible, I doubt not that man's spirit has crept out here and there between my words—as a smell creeps from under coverings. He hated me, being jealous. He hated Ranjoor Singh, because of merited rebuke and punishment. He was all for himself, and if one said one thing he must say another, lest the first man get too much credit. Furthermore, he was a *badmash* (low ruffian), born of a money-lender's niece to a man mean enough to marry such. Other true charges I could lay against him, but my tale is of Ranjoor Singh and why should I sully it with mean accounts; Gooja Singh must trespass in among it, but let that be all.

Third of us daffadars in order of seniority was Anim Singh, a big man, born in the village next my father's. He was a naik in the Tirah in '97 when he came to the rescue of an officer, splitting the skull of an Orakzai, wounding three others, and making prisoner a fourth who sought to interfere. Thus he won promotion, and he held it after somewhat the same manner. A blunt man. A fairly good man. A very good man with the saber. A gambler, it is true—but whose affair is that? A ready eye for rustling curtains and footholds near open windows, but that is his affair again—until the woman's husband intervenes. And they say he can look after himself in such cases. At least he lives. Behold him, sahib.

Aye, that is he yonder, swaggering as if India can scarcely hold him—that one with his arm in a sling. A Sikh, sahib, with a soldier's heart and ears too big for his head—excellent things on outpost, where the little noises often mean so much, but all too easy for Gooja Singh to whisper into.

Of the other four the next was Ramnarain

Digitized by Google

Singh, the shortest as to inches of us all, but perhaps the most active on his feet. A man with a great wealth of beard and too much dignity due to his father's *thaluk dari* (landed estate). His father pockets the rent of three fat villages, so the son believes himself a wisehead. A great talker. Brave in battle, as one must be to be daffadar of Outram's Own, but too assertive of his own opinion. He and Gooja Singh were ever at outs, resentful of each other's claim to wisdom.

Next was Chatar Singh, like me son and grandson of a soldier of the Raj—a bold man, something heavy on his horse, but able to sever a sheep in two with one blow of his saber—very well regarded by the troopers because of physical strength and willingness to overlook offenses. Chatar Singh's chief weakness was respect for cunning. Having only a great bull's heart in him and ability to go forward and endure, he regarded cunning as very admirable; and so Gooja Singh had one daffadar to work on from the outset—although I did what I could to make trouble between them.

The remaining two non-commissioned officers were naiks—corporals, as you would say—Surat Singh and Mirath Singh, both rather recently promoted from the ranks and therefore likely to see both sides to a question—whereas a naik should rightly see but one. Very early I had taken those two naiks in hand, showing them friendship, harping on the honor and the pleasure of being daffadar and on the chance of quick promotion.

Given a British commanding officer—just one British officer—even a little, young one—one would have been enough—it would have been hard to find better backing for him. Even Gooja Singh would scarcely have failed a British leader. But not only was the feeling still strong against Ranjoor Singh; there was another cloud in the sky. Did the sahib ever lay his hands on loot? No? Ah! Love of that runs in the blood, and crops out generation after generation!

Until the British came and overthrew our Sikh kingdom—and that was not long ago—loot was the staff of life of all Sikh armies. In those days when an army needed pay there was a war. Now, except for one month's pay that, as I have told, the Germans gave us, we had seen no money since the day when we surrendered in that Flanders trench; and what the Germans gave us Ranjoor Singh took away, in order to bribe the captain of a Turkish ship. And Gooja Singh swore morning, noon, and night that as prisoners of war we should not be entitled to pay from the British in any event, even supposing we could ever contrive to find the British and rejoin them.

"Let us loot, then, and pay ourselves!" was the unanimous verdict, I being about the only one who did not voice it. I claim no credit. I saw no loot, so what was the use of talking? We were crossing a desert where a crow could have found small plunder. But being by common consent official go-between, I rode to Ranjoor Singh's side and told him what the men were saying.

"Aye," he nodded, not so much as looking sideways, "any one would know they are saying that. What say the Turk and Tugendheim?"

"Loot, too!" said I, and he grunted.

It was this way, sahib. Our Turkish officer-prisoner was always put with his forty men to march in front—behind our advance guard but in front of the carts and infantry. Thus there was no risk of his escaping, because for one thing he had no saddle and rode with such discomfort and so unsafely that he preferred to march on foot more often than not; and for another, that arrangement left him never out of sight of nearly all of us.

One of us daffadars would generally march beside him, and some of the Syrian muleteers had learned English either in Egypt or the Levant ports, so that there was no lack of interpreters. I myself have marched beside the Turk for miles and miles on end, with Abraham translating for us.

"Why not loot? Who can prevent you? Who shall call you to account?" was the burden of the Turk's song.

And Tugendheim, who spoke our tongue fluently, marched as a rule among the men, or rode with the mounted men, watched day and night by the four troopers who had charge of him—better mounted than he, and very mindful of their honor in the matter. He made himself as agreeable as he could, telling tales about his life in India—not proper tales to tell to a sahib, but such as to make the troopers laugh; so that finally the things he said began to carry the weight that goes with friendliness.

He soon discovered what the feeling was toward Ranjoor Singh, and somehow or

Digitized by Google

other he found out what the Turk was talking about. After that he took the Turk's cue—although he sincerely despised Turks—and began with hint and jest to propagate lust for loot in the men's minds. Partly I think he planned to enrich himself and buy his way to safety—although God knows in which direction he thought safety lay! Partly I think he hoped to bring us to destruction, and so perhaps offset his offense of having yielded to our threats, hoping in that way to rehabilitate himself. So goes a lawyer to court, sure of a fee if his client wins, yet sure too of a fee if his client loses, enjoying profit and entertainment in any event.

Yet who shall blame Tugendheim? Unlike a lawyer, he stood to take the consequences if both forks of the stick should fail. I told Ranjoor Singh all that Tugendheim and the Turk were saying to the men, and his brow darkened, although he made no comment. He did not trust me yet any more than he felt compelled to.

"Send Abraham to me," he said at last. So I went and sent Abraham, feeling jealous that the Syrian should hear what I might not.

RANJOOR SINGH had been forcing the pace, and by the time I speak of now we had nearly crossed that desert, for a rim of hills was in front of us and all about. It was not true desert, such as we have in our Punjab, but a great plain already showing promise of the Spring, with the buds of countless flowers getting ready to burst open; when we lay at rest it amused us to pluck them and try to determine what they would look like when their time should come. And besides flowers there were roots, remarkably good to eat, that the Syrians called "daughters of thunder," saying that was the local name. Tugendheim called them truffles. A little water and that desert would be fertile farmland, or I never saw corn grow!

Ranjoor Singh conversed with Abraham until we entered a defile between the hills; and that night we camped in a little valley with our outposts in a ring around us, Ranjoor Singh sitting by a bright fire half-way up the side of a slope where he could overlook us all and be alone. We had seen mounted men two or three times that day, they mistaking us perhaps for Turkish troops for they vanished after the first glimpse. Nevertheless, we tethered our horses close in the valley bottom, and lay around them, ready for all contingencies.

I remember that night well, for it was the first since we started eastward in the least to resemble our Indian nights. It made us feel homesick, and some of the men were crooning love-songs. The stars swung low, looking as if a man could almost reach them, and the smoke of our fires hung sweet on the night air. I was listening to Abraham's tales about Turks—tales to make a man bite his beard—when Ranjoor Singh called me in a voice that carried far without making much noise—I have never known him to raise his voice so high or loud that it lost dignity.

"Hira Singh!" he called, and I answered "Ha, sahib!" and went clambering up the hill.

He let me stand three minutes, reading my eyes through the darkness, before he motioned me to sit. So then we sat facing, I one side the fire and he the other.

"I have watched you, Hira Singh," he said at last. "Now and again I have seemed to see a proper spirit in you. Nay, words are but fragments of the wind!" said he—I had begun to make him protestations—"There are words tossing back and forth below," he said, looking past me down into the hollow, where shadows of men were, and now and then the eye of a horse would glint in firelight. Then he said quietly—

"The spirit of a Sikh requires deeds of us."

"Deeds in the dark?" said I, for I hoped to learn more of what was in his mind.

"Should a Sikh's heart fail him in the dark?" he asked.

"Have I failed you," said I, "since you came to us in the prison camp?"

"Who am I?" said he, and I did not answer, for I wondered what he meant.

He said no more for a minute or two, but listened to our pickets calling their numbers one to another in the dark above us.

"If you serve me," he said at last, "how are you better than the stable-helper in cantonments who groomed my horse well for his own belly's sake? I can give you a full belly, but your honor is your own. How shall I know your heart?"

I thought for a long while, looking up at the stars. He was not impatient, so I took time and considered well, understanding him now, but pained that he should care nothing for my admiration.

Digitized by Google

"Sahib," I said finally, "by this oath you shall know my heart. Should I ever doubt you I will tear out your heart and lay it on a dunghill."

"Good!" said he.

But I remember he made me no threat in return, so that even to this day I wonder how my words sounded in his ears. I am left wondering whether I was man enough to dare swear such an oath. If he had sworn me a threat in return I should have felt more at ease—more like his equal. But who would have gained by that? My heart and my belly are not one. Self-satisfaction would not have helped.

"Soon," he said, looking into my eyes beside the fire, "we shall meet opportunities for looting. Yet we have food enough for men and mules and horses for many a day to come; and as the corn grows less, more men can ride in the carts, so that we shall move the swifter. But now this map of mine grows vague and our road leads more and more into the unknown. We need eyes ahead of us. I can control the men if I stay with them, but in that case who shall ride on and procure intelligence?"

In a flash I saw his meaning. There was none but he wise enough to ride ahead. But who else could control the men—men who believed they had sloughed the regiment's honor in a Flanders trench and a German prison camp? They were sloughing their personal honor that minute, fraternizing with Turkish prisoners. With their sense of honor gone could even Ranjoor Singh control them? Perhaps! But if Ranjoor Singh rode forward who should stay behind and stand in his shoes?

I looked at the stars, that had the color of jewels in them. I listened to the night birds. I heard the wind soughing—the mules and horses stamping—the murmur of men's voices. My tongue itched to say some foolish word, that would have proved me unfit to be trusted out of sight. But the thought came to me to be still and listen. And still I remained, until he began again.

"If I told the men the true position, they would grow desperate," he said. "They would believe the case hopeless."

"They almost believe that now!" said I.

"Have the Turk and Tugendheim been kept apart?" said he.

"Aye," I answered. "They have not had ten words together."

"Good," said he. "Neither Turk nor Tugendheim knows the whole truth, but if they get together they might concoct a very plausible, misleading tale."

"They would better have been bound and gagged," said I.

"No," he answered. "If I had bound and gagged them it would have established sympathy between them, and they would have found some way of talking nevertheless. Kept apart and let talk, the Turk will be saying one thing, Tugendheim another."

"True," said I. "For now the Turk advises plunder to right and left, and settlement afterward among Armenian villages. He says there are women to be had for the taking. 'Be a new nation!' says he."

"And what says Tugendheim?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"'Plunder!'" said I. "'Plunder and push northward into Russia! The Russians will welcome you,' says he, 'and perhaps accept me into their secret service!'—'Plunder the Turks!' says Tugendheim. 'Plunder the Armenians!' says the Turk."

"I, too, would be all for Russia," he answered, "but it isn't possible. The coast of the Black Sea, and from the Black Sea down to the Persian frontier, is held by a very great Turkish army. The main caravan routes lie to the north of us, and every inch of them is watched."

"I am glad then that it must be Egypt," said I. "A long march, but friends at the other end. Who but doubts Russians?"

He shook his head.

"Syria and Palestine," he said, "are full of an army gathering to invade Egypt. It eats up the land like locusts. An elephant could march easier unseen into a house than we into Syria!"

"So we must double back?" said I. "Good! By now they must have ceased looking for us, supposing they ever thought us anything but drowned. Somewhere we can surely find a ship in which to cross to Gallipoli!"

He laughed and shook his head again.

"We slipped through the one unguarded place," he said. "If we had come one day later that place too would have been held by some watchful one, instead of by the fool we found in charge."

Then at last I thought surely I knew what his objective *must* be. It had been common talk in Flanders how an expedition marched from Busra up the Tigris.

Digitized by Google

"Bagdad!" I said. "We march to Bagdad to join the British there! Bagdad is good!"

But he answered:

"Bagdad is not yet taken—not yet nearly taken. Between us and Bagdad lies a Turkish army of fifty or sixty thousand men at least."

I sat silent. I can draw a map of the world and set the rivers and cities and boundaries down; so I knew that if we could go neither north nor south nor westward, there remained only eastward, straight forward into Persia. He read my thoughts, and nodded.

"Persia is neutral," he said with a wave of his hand that might mean anything. "The Turks have spared no army for one section of the Persian frontier, choosing to depend on savage tribes. And the Germans have given them Wassmuss to help out."

"Ah!" said I, making ready to learn at last who Wassmuss might be. "When we have found this Wassmuss, are we to make him march with us like Tugendheim?"

"If what the Germans in Stamboul said of him is only half true," he answered, "we shall find him hard to catch. Wassmuss is a remarkable man. Before the war he was consul in Bagdad or somewhere, and he must have improved his time for he knows enough now to keep all the tribes stirred up against Russians and British. The Germans send him money, and he scatters it like corn among the hens; but the money would be little use without brains. The Germans admire him greatly, and he certainly seems a man to be wondered at. But he is the one weak point nevertheless—the only key that can open a door for us."

"But if he is too wary to be caught?" said I.

"Who knows?" he answered with another of those short, gruff laughs. "But I know this," said he, "that from afar, hills look like a blank wall, yet come closer and the ends of valleys open. Moreover, where the weakest joint is, smite! So I shall ride ahead and hunt for that weakest joint, and you shall shepherd the men along behind me. Go and bring Abraham and the Turk!"

I WENT and found them. Abraham was already asleep, no longer wearing the Turkish private soldier's uniform but his own old clothes again—because, the Turkish soldier having done nothing meriting punishment, Ranjoor Singh had ordered him his uniform returned. I awoke him and together we went and found the Turk sitting between a Syrian and Gooja Singh; and although I did not overhear one word of what they were saying I saw that Gooja Singh believed I had been listening. It seemed good to me to let him deceive himself, so I smiled as I touched the Turk's shoulder.

"Lo! Here is our second-in-command!" sneered Gooja Singh, but I affected not to notice.

"Come!" said I, showing the Turk slight courtesy, and, getting up clumsily like a buffalo out of the mud, he followed Abraham and me. Some of the men made as if to come too out of curiosity, but Gooja Sing recalled them and they clustered round him.

When I had brought the Turk uphill to the fireside, Ranjoor Singh had only one word to say to him.

"Strip!" he ordered.

Aye, sahib! There and then, without excuse or explanation, he made the Turkish officer remove his clothes and change with Abraham; and I never saw a man more unwilling or resentful! Abraham had told me all about Turkish treatment of Syrians, and it is the way of the world that men most despise those whom they most ill-treat. So that although Turks have no caste distinctions that I know of, that one felt like a high-caste Brahman ordered to change garments with a sweeper. He looked as if he would infinitely rather die.

"Hurry!" Ranjoor Singh ordered him in English.

"*Hurriet?*" said the Turk. *Hurriet* is their Turkish word for liberty. All the troops in Stamboul used it constantly, and Ranjoor Singh told me it means much the same as the French cry of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity!" The Turk seemed bewildered, and opened his eyes wider than ever; but whatever his thoughts were about *hurriet* he rightly interpreted the look in Ranjoor Singh's eye and obeyed, grimacing like a monkey as he drew on Abraham's dirty garments.

"You shall wear the rags of a driver of mules if you talk any more about loot to your men or mine!" said Ranjoor Singh. "If I proposed to loot, I would bury you for a beginning, lest there be nothing for the rest of us!"

Digitized by Google

He made Abraham translate that into Turkish, lest the full gist of it be lost, and I sat comparing the two men. It was strange to see what a change the uniform made in Abraham's appearance—what a change, too, came over the Turk. Had I not known, I could never have guessed the positions had once been reversed. Abraham looked like an officer. The Turk looked like a peasant. He was a big, upstanding man, although with pouches under his eyes that gave the lie to his look of strength. Now for the first time Ranjoor Singh set a picked guard over him, calling out the names of four troopers who came hurrying uphill through the dark.

"Let your honor and this man's ward be one!" said he, and they answered—

"Our honor be it!"

He could not have chosen better if he had lined up the regiment and taken half a day. Those four were troopers whom I myself had singled out as men to be depended on when a pinch should come, and I wondered that Ranjoor Singh should so surely know them too.

"Take him and keep him!" he ordered, and they went off, not at all sorry to be excused from other duties, as now of course they must be.

Counting the four who guarded Tugendheim that made a total of eight troopers probably incorruptible, for there is nothing, sahib, that can compare with imposing a trust when it comes to making sure of men's good faith. Hedge them about with precautions and they will revolt or be half-hearted; impose open trust in them, and if they be well chosen they will die true.

"Now," said he to me when they were out of hearing, "I shall take with me one daffadar, one naik, and forty mounted men. Sometimes I shall take Abraham, sometimes Tugendheim, sometimes the Turk. This time I shall take the Turk, and before dawn I shall be gone. Let it be known that the best behaved of those I leave with you shall be promoted to ride with me—just as my unworthy ones shall be degraded to march on foot with you. That will help a little."

"Aye," said I, "a little. Which daffadar will you take? That will help more!" said I.

"Gooja Singh," he answered, and I marveled.

"Sahib," I said, "take him out of sight and bury his body! Make an end!" I urged. "In Flanders they shot men against a wall for far less than he has talked about!"

"Flanders is one place and this another," he answered. "Should I make those good men more distrustful than they are? Should I shoot Gooja Singh unless I am afraid of him?"

I said no more because I knew he was right. If he should shoot Gooja Singh the troopers would ascribe it to nothing else than fear. A British officer might do it and they would say "Behold how he scorns to shirk responsibility!" Yet of Ranjoor Singh they would have said "He fears us, and behold the butchery begins! Who shall be next?" Nevertheless, had I stood in his shoes I would have shot and buried Gooja Singh to forestall trouble.

I would have shot Gooja Singh and the Turk and Tugendheim all three with one volley. And the Turk's forty men would have met a like fate at the first excuse. But that is because I was afraid, whereas Ranjoor Singh was not. I greatly feared being left behind to bring the men along, and the more I thought of it the worse the prospect seemed; so I began to tell of things I had heard Gooja Singh say against him, and which of the men I had heard and seen to agree, for there is no good sense in a man who is afraid.

"Is it my affair to take vengeance on them, or to lead them into safety?" he asked. And what could I answer?

After some silence he spread out his map where firelight shone on it and showed Abraham and me where the Tigris River runs by Diarbekr.

"Thus," he said, "we must go," pointing with his finger, "and thus—and thus—by Diarbekr, down by the Tigris, by Mosul, into Kurdistan, to Sulimanieh, and thence into Persia—a very long march through very wild country. Outside the cities I am told no Turk dare show himself with less than four hundred men at his back, so we will keep to the open. If the Turks mistake us for Turks, the better for us. If the tribes mistake us for Turks, the worse for us; for they say the tribes hate Turks worse than the smallpox. If they think we are Turks they will attack us. We need ride warily."

"It would take more Turks than there are," I said, "to keep our ruffians from trying to plunder the first city they see! And as for tribes—they are in a mood to join

Digitized by Google

with any one who will help make trouble!"

"Then it may be," he answered quietly, "that they will not lack exercise! Follow me and lend a hand!" And he led down toward the camp-fires, where very few men slept and voices rose upward like the noise of a quarrelsome waterfall.

Just as on that night when we captured the carts and Turks and Syrians, he now used the cover of darkness to reorganize; and the very first thing he did was to make the forty Turkish prisoners change clothes with Syrians—the Turks objecting with much bad language and the Syrians not seeming to relish it much, for fear I suppose of reprisals. But he made the Turks hand over their rifles as well to the Syrians; and then, of all unlikely people he chose Tugendheim to command the Syrians and to drill them and teach them discipline! He set him to drilling them there and then, with a row of fires to see by.

In the flash of an eye, as you might say, we had thus fifty extra infantry, ten of them neither uniformed or armed as yet, but all of them at least afraid to run away. Tugendheim looked doubtful for a minute, but he was given his choice of that, or death, or of wearing a Syrian's cast-off clothes and driving mules. He well understood—for I could tell by his manner of consenting—that Ranjoor Singh would send him into action against the first Turks we could find, thus committing him to further treason against the Central Powers; but he had gone too far already to turn back.

And as for the Syrians—they had had a lifetime's experience of Turkish treatment, and had recently been taught to associate Germans with Turks; so if Tugendheim should meditate treachery it was unlikely his Syrians would join him in it. It was promotion to a new life for them—occupation for Tugendheim, who had been growing bored and perhaps dangerous on that account—and not so dreadfully distressing to the Turkish soldiers, who could now ride on the carts instead of marching on weary feet.

They had utterly no ambition, those Turkish soldiers; they cared neither for their officer—which was small wonder—nor for the rifles that we took away, which surprised us greatly—for in the absence of lance or saber we regarded our rifles as evidence of manhood. They objected to the dirty garments they received in exchange for the uniforms, and they despised us Sikhs for men without religion—so they said!—but it did not seem to trouble them whether they fought on one side or the other, or whether they fought at all, so long as they had cigarets and food.

Yet I did not receive the impression they were cowards—brutes perhaps, but not cowards. When they came under fire later on they made no effort to desert with the carts to their own side; and when we asked them why, they said because we fed them! They added they had not been paid for more than eighteen months.

Why did not Ranjoor Singh make this arrangement sooner? you ask. Why did he wait so long, and then choose the night of all times? Not all thoughts are instantaneous, sahib; some seem to develop out of patience and silence and attention. Moreover, it takes time for captured men to readjust their attitude—as the Germans, for instance, well knew when they gave us time for thought in the prison camp at Oeschersleben. When we first took the Syrians prisoner they were so tired and timid as to be worthless for anything but driving carts, whereas now we had fed them and befriended them. On the other hand in the beginning the Turks, if given a chance, would have stampeded with the carts toward Angora.

Now that both Turks and Syrians had grown used to being prisoners and to obeying us, they were less likely to think independently—in the same way that a new-caught elephant in the keddah is frenzied and dangerous, but after a week or two is learning tricks.

And as for choosing the night-time for the change, every soldier knows that the darkness is on the side of him whose plans are laid. He who is taken unawares must then contend with both ignorance and darkness. Thieves prefer the dark. Wolves hunt in the dark. Fishermen fish in the dark. And the wise commander who would change his dispositions makes use of darkness too. Men who might disobey by daylight are like lambs when they cannot see beyond the light a camp-fire throws.

But such things are mental, sahib, and not to be explained like the fire of heavy guns or the shock tactics of cavalry—although not one atom less effective. If Ranjoor Singh had lined up the men and argued with them, there might have been mutiny.

Digitized by Google

Instead, when he judged the second ripe, he made sudden new dispositions in the night and gave them something else to think about without suggesting to their minds that he might be worried about them or suspicious of them. On the contrary, he took opportunity to praise some individuals and distribute merited rewards.

For instance, he promoted the two naiks, Surath Singh and Mirath Singh, to be daffadars on probation, to their very great surprise and absolute contentment. The four who guarded Tugendheim he raised to the rank of naik, bidding them help Tugendheim drill the Syrians without relaxing vigilance over him. Then he chose six more troopers to be naiks. And of the eighty mounted men he degraded eighteen to march on foot again, replacing them with more obedient ones. Then at last I understood why he had chosen some grumblers to ride in the first instance—simply in order that he might make room for promotion of others at the proper time, offsetting discontent with emulation.

Then of the eighty mounted men he picked the forty best. He gave Abraham's saddle to Gooja Singh, set one of the new naiks over the left wing, and Gooja Singh over the right wing of the forty, under himself, and ordered rations for three days to be cooked and served out to the forty, including corn for their horses. They had to carry it all in the knapsacks on their own backs, since none had saddles yet.

GOOJA SINGH eyed me by firelight while this was going on, with his tongue in his cheek, as much as to say I had been superseded and would know it soon. When I affected not to notice he said aloud in my hearing that men who sat on both sides of a fence were never on the right side when the doings happen. And when I took no notice of that he asked me in a very loud voice whether my heart quailed at the prospect of being left a mile or two behind. But I let him have his say. Neither he, nor any of the men, had the slightest idea yet of Ranjoor Singh's real plan.

After another talk with me, Ranjoor Singh was to horse and away with his forty an hour before daybreak, the Turkish officer riding bareback in Syrian clothes between the four who had been set to guard him. And the sound of the departing hoofs had scarcely ceased drumming down the valley when the men left behind with me began to put me to a test.

Abraham was near me, and I saw him tremble and change color. Sikh troopers are not little baa-lambs, sahib, to be driven this and that way with a twig! Tugendheim too, ready to preach mutiny and plunder, was afraid to begin lest they turn and tear him first. He listened with both ears, and watched with both eyes, but kept among his Syrians.

"Whither has he gone?" the men demanded, gathering round me where I stooped to feel my horse's forelegs. And I satisfied myself the puffiness was due to neither splint nor ring-bone before I answered. There was just a little glimmer of the false dawn, and what with that and the dying fires we could all see well enough. I could see trouble—out of both eyes.

"Whither rides Ranjoor Singh?" they demanded excitedly.

"Whither we follow!" said I, binding a strip from a Syrian's loin-cloth round the horse's leg—What use had the Syrian for it now that he wore uniform? And it served the horse well.

A trooper took me by the shoulder and drew me upright. At another time he should have been shot for impudence, but I had learned a lesson from Ranjoor Singh too recently to let temper get the better of me.

"Thou art afraid!" said I. "Thy hand on my shoulder trembles!"

The man let his hand fall and laughed to show himself unafraid. Before he could think of an answer twenty others had thrust him aside and confronted me.

"Whither rides Ranjoor Singh? Whither does he ride?" they asked. "Make haste and tell us!"

"Would ye bring him back?" said I, wondering what to say.

Ranjoor Singh had told me little more than that we were drawing near the neighborhood of danger, and that I was to follow warily along his track. "God will put true thoughts in your heart," he told me, "if you are a true man, and are silent, and listen." His words were true. I did not speak until I was compelled. Consider the sequel, sahib.

"Ye have talked these days past," said I, "of nothing but loot—loot—loot! Ye have lusted like wolves for lowing cattle! Yet

Digitized by Google

now ye ask me whither rides Ranjoor Singh! Whither *should* he ride? He rides to find bees for you whose stings have all been drawn, that ye may suck honey without harm! He rides to find you victims that can not strike back! Sergeant Tugendheim," said I, "see that your Syrians do not fall over one another's rifles! March in front with them," I ordered, "that we may all see how well you drill them! Fall in, all!" said I, "and he who wishes to be camp guard when the looting begins, let him be slow about obeying!"

Well, sahib, some laughed and some did not. The most dangerous said nothing. But they all obeyed, and that was the main thing. Not more than an hour and a half after Ranjoor Singh had ridden off, our carts were squeaking and bumping along behind us. And within an hour after that we were in action!

Aye, sahib, I should say it was less than an hour after the start when I halted to serve out ten cartridges apiece to the Syrians, that Tugendheim might blood them and get himself into deeper water at the same time. He was angry that I would not give him more cartridges, but I told him his men would waste those few, so why should I not be frugal?

When the time came I don't think the Syrians hit anything, but they filled a gap and served a double purpose; for after Tugendheim had let them blaze away those ten rounds each there was less fear than ever of his daring to attempt escape. Thenceforward his prospects and ours were one. But my tale goes faster than the column did, that could travel no faster than the slowest man and the weakest mule.

We were far in among the hills now—little, low hills with broad open spaces between, in which thousands of cattle could have grazed. Only there were no cattle. I rode, as Ranjoor Singh usually did, twenty or thirty horse's lengths away on the right flank, well forward, where I could see the whole column with one quick turn of the head. I had ten troopers riding a quarter of a mile in front, and a rear guard of ten more, but none riding on the flanks because to our left the hills were steep and impracticable and to our right I could generally see for miles, although not always.

We dipped into a hollow, and I thought I heard rifle shots. I urged my horse uphill, and sent him up a steep place from the top of which I had a fine view. Then I heard many shots, and looked, and lo! a battle was before my eyes. Not a great battle—really only a skirmish, although to my excited mind it seemed much more at first. And the first one I recognized taking his part in it was Ranjoor Singh.

I could see no infantry at all. About a hundred Turkish cavalry were being furiously attacked by sixty or seventy mounted men who looked like Kurds, and who turned out later really to be Kurds. The Kurds were very well mounted, riding recklessly, firing from horseback at full gallop and wasting great quantities of ammunition.

The shooting must have been extremely bad, for I could see neither dead bodies nor empty saddles, but nevertheless the Turks appeared anxious to escape—the more so because Ranjoor Singh with his forty men was heading them off. As I watched, one of them blew a trumpet and they all retreated helter-skelter toward us—straight toward us. There was nothing else they could do, now that they had given way.

It was like the letter Y—thus, sahib—see, I draw in the dust—the Kurds coming this way at an angle—Ranjoor Singh and his forty coming this way—and we advancing toward them all along the bottom stroke of the Y, with hills around forming an arena. The best the Turks could do would have been to take the higher ground where we were and there reform, except for the fact that we had come on the scene unknown to them. Now that we had arrived they were caught in a trap.

There was plenty of time, especially as we were hidden from view, but I worked swiftly, the men obeying readily enough now that a fight seemed certain. I posted Tugendheim with his Syrians in the center, with the rest of us in equal halves to right and left, keeping Abraham by me and giving Anim Singh, as next to me in seniority, command of our left wing.

We were in a rough new-moon formation, all well under cover, with the carts in a hollow to our rear. By the time I was ready the oncoming Turks were not much more than a quarter of a mile away; and now I could see empty saddles at last, for some of the Kurds had dismounted and were firing from the ground with good effect.

I gave no order to open fire until they came within three hundred yards of us. Then I ordered volleys, and the Syrians

Digitized by Google

forthwith made a very great noise at high speed, our own troopers taking their time and aiming low as ordered. We cavalrymen are not good shots as a rule, rather given in fact to despising all weapons except the lance and saber, and perhaps a pistol on occasion. But the practise in Flanders had worked wonders, and at our first volley seven or eight men rolled out of the saddles, the horses continuing to gallop on toward us.

The surprise was so great that the Turks drew rein, and we gave them three more volleys while they considered matters, bringing down a number of them. They seemed to have no officer, and were much confused. Not knowing who we were they turned away from us and made as if to surrender to the enemy they did know, but the Kurds rode in on them and in less than five minutes there was not one Turk left alive.

My men were for rushing down to secure the loot, but it seemed likely to me that the Kurds might mistake that for hostility and I prevailed on the men to keep still until Ranjoor Singh should come. And presently I saw Ranjoor Singh ride up to the leader of the Kurds and talk with him, using our Turkish officer-prisoner as interpreter. Presently he and the Kurdish chief rode together toward us, and the Kurd looked us over, saying nothing—Ranjoor Singh told me afterward that the Kurd wished to be convinced that we were many enough to enforce fair play.

The long and the short of it was that we received half the captured horses—that is thirty-five, for some had been killed—and all the saddles, no less than ninety of them, besides mauser rifles and uniforms for our ten unarmed Syrians. The Kurds took all the remainder, watching to make sure that the Syrians, whom we sent to help themselves to uniforms, took nothing else. When the Kurds had finished looting they rode away toward the south without so much as a backward glance at us.

I asked Ranjoor Singh how Turkish cavalry had come to let themselves get caught thus unsupported, and he said he did not know.

"Yet I have learned something," he said. "I shot the Turkish commander's horse myself, and my men pounced on him. That demoralized his men and made the rest easy. Now I have questioned the Turk, and between him and the Kurdish chief I have discovered good reason to hurry forward."

"I would weigh that Kurd's information twice!" said I. "He cut those Turks down in cold blood. What is he but a cutthroat robber?"

"Let him weigh what I told him, then, three times!" he answered with a laugh. "Have you any men hurt?"

"No," said I.

"Then give me a mile start, and follow!" he ordered.

And in another minute he was riding away at the head of his forty, slowly for sake of the horses, but far faster than I could go with all those laden carts. And I had to give a start of much more than a mile because of the trouble we had in fitting the saddles to our mounts. I wished he had left the captured Turkish officer behind to explain his nation's cursed saddle-straps!

WE RODE on presently over the battle-ground; and although I have seen looting on more than one battle-field I have never seen anything so thorough as the work those Kurds had done. They had left the dead naked, without a boot, or a sock, or a rag of cloth among them. Here and there fingers had been hacked off, for the sake of rings I suppose. There were vultures on the wing toward the dead, some looking already half-gorged, which made me wonder. I wondered, too, whither the Kurds had ridden off in such a hurry. What could be happening to the southward? Ranjoor Singh had gone due east.

It was not long before Ranjoor Singh rode out of sight in a cloud of dust, disappearing between two low hills that seemed to guard the rim of the hollow we were crossing. At midday I let the column rest in the cleft between those hills, not troubling to climb and look beyond because the men were turbulent and kept me watchful, and also because I knew well Ranjoor Singh would send back word of any danger ahead. And so he did. I was sitting eating my own meal when his messenger came galloping through the gap with a little slip of twisted paper in his teeth:

"Bring them along," said the message. "Don't halt again until you overtake me."

So I made every one of the mounted men take up a man behind, and the rest of the unmounted men I ordered into the carts, including Tugendheim's Syrians, judging it better to overtax the animals than to be too

Digitized by Google

long on the road. And the long and short of that was that we overtook Ranjoor Singh at about four that afternoon. Our animals were weary, but the men were fit to fight.

Ranjoor Singh ordered Abraham to take the Syrians and all the carts and horses down into a hollow where there was a water-hole, and to wait there for further orders. Tugendheim was bidden come with us on foot; and without any explanation he led us all toward a low ridge that faced us, rising here and there into an insignificant hill.

It looked like blown sand over which coarse grass had grown, and such it proved to be, for it was on the edge of another desert. It was fifty or sixty feet high, and rather difficult to climb, but he led us straight up it, cautioning us to be silent and not to show ourselves on the far side. On the top we crawled forward eighteen or twenty yards on our bellies, until we lay at last gazing downward. It was plain then whence those half-gorged vultures came.

Who shall describe what we saw? Did the sahib ever hear of Armenian massacres? This was worse. If this had been a massacre we would have known what to do, for our Sikh creed bids us ever take the part of the oppressed. But this was something that we did not understand, that held us speechless, each man searching his own heart for explanation, and Ranjoor Singh standing a little behind us watching us all.

There were hundreds of men, women, and little children being herded by Turks toward the desert—southward. The line was long drawn out, for the Armenians were weary. They had no food with them, no tents, and scarcely any clothing. Here and there, in parties at intervals along the line, rode Turkish soldiers; and when an Armenian, man or woman or child, would seek to rest, a Turk would spur down on him and prick him back into line with his lance—man, woman, or child as the case might be.

Some of the Turks cracked whips, and when they did that the Armenians who were not too far spent would shudder as if the very sound had cut their flesh. How did I know they were Armenians? I did not know. I learned that afterward.

Some wept. Some moaned. But the most were silent and dry-eyed, moving slowly forward like people in a dream. Oh, sahib, I have had bad dreams in my day, and other men have told me theirs, but never one like that!

There was a little water-hole below where we lay—the merest cupful fed by a trickle from below the hill. Some of them gathered there to scoop the water in their hands and drink, and I saw a Turk ride among them, spurring his horse back and forward until the water was all foul mud. Nevertheless, they continued drinking until he and another Turk flogged them forward.

"Sahib!" said I, calling to Ranjoor Singh. "A favor, sahib!"

He came and lay beside me with his chin on his hand. "What is it?" said he.

"The life of that Turk who trod the water into mud!" said I. "Let me have the winding up of his career!"

"Wait a while!" said he. "Let the men watch. Watch thou the men!"

So I did watch the men, and I saw cold anger grow among them, like an anodyne, making them forget their own affairs. I began to wonder how long Ranjoor Singh would dare let them lie there, unless perhaps he deliberately planned to stir them into uncontrol. But he was wiser than to do that. Just so far he meant their wrath should urge them—so far and no further. He watched as one might watch a fuse.

"Those Kurds of this morning," he told me—never taking his eyes off the men—"hurried off to the southward expecting to meet this very procession. Kurds hate Turks, and Turks fear Kurds, but in this they are playing to and fro, each into the other's hands. The Turks drive Armenians out into the desert, where the Kurds come down on them and plunder. The Turks return for more Armenians, and so the game goes on. I learned all that from our Turkish officer we took this morning."

While he spoke a little child died not a hundred yards away from where I lay. Its mother lay by it and wept, but a Turk spurred down and pierced the child's body on his lance, tossing it into the midst of a score of others who went forward dumbly. Another Turk riding along behind him thrashed the woman to her feet.

"That ought to do," said Ranjoor Singh, crawling backward out of sight and then getting to his feet.

Then he called us, and we all crawled backward to the rear edge of the ridge. And there at last we stood facing him. I saw Gooja Singh whispering in Anim Singh's great ear. Ranjoor Singh saw it too.

Digitized by Google

"Stand forth, Gooja Singh!" he ordered. And Gooja Singh stood a little forward from the others, half truculent and half afraid.

"What do you want?" asked Ranjoor Singh. "Of what were you whispering?" But Gooja Singh did not answer.

"No need to tell me!" said Ranjoor Singh. "I know! Ye all seek leave to loot! As sons of *thalukdars* (landholders)—as trusted soldiers of the Raj—as brave men—honorable men—ye seek to prove yourselves!"

They gasped at him—all of them, Tugendheim included. I tell you he was a brave man to stand and throw that charge in the teeth of such a regiment, not one man of whom reckoned himself less than gentleman. I looked to my pistol and made ready to go and die beside him, for I saw that he had chosen his own ground and intended there and then to overcome or fail.

"Lately but one thought has burned in all your hearts," he told them. "Loot! Loot! Loot! Me ye have misnamed friend of Germany—friend of Turkey—enemy of Britain! Yourselves ye call honorable men!"

"Why not?" asked Gooja Singh, greatly daring because the men were looking to him to answer for them. "Hitherto we have done no shameful thing!"

"No shameful thing?" said Ranjoor Singh. "Ye have called me traitor behind my back, yet to my face ye have obeyed me these weeks past. Ye have used me while it served your purpose, planning to toss me aside at the first excuse. Is that not shameful? Now we reach the place where ye must do instead of talk. Below is the plunder ye have yearned for, and here stand I, between it and you!"

"We have yearned for no such plunder as that!" said Gooja Singh, for the men would have answered unless he did, and he too was minded to make his bid for the ascendancy.

"No?" said Ranjoor Singh. " 'No carrion for me!' said the jackal. 'I only eat what a tiger killed!' "

He folded his arms and stood quite patiently. None could mistake his meaning. There was to be one way or the other a decision reached on that spot, as to who sought honor and who sought shame. He himself submitted to no judgment. It was the regiment that stood on trial! A weak man would have stood and explained himself.

Presently Ramnarain Singh, seeing that Gooja Singh was likely to get too much credit with the men, took up the cudgels and stood forward.

"Tell us truly, sahib," he piped up. "Are you truly for the Raj, or is this some hunt of your own on which you lead us?"

"Ye might have asked me that before!" said Ranjoor Singh. "Now ye shall answer me my question first! When I have your answer I will give you mine swiftly enough, in deeds not words! What is the outcome of all your talk? Below there is the loot, and, as I said, here stand I between it and you! Now decide, what will ye?"

He turned his back, and that was bravery again; for under his eye the men were used to showing him respect, whereas behind his back they had grown used to maligning him. Yet he had thrown their shame in their very teeth, because he knew their hearts were men's hearts. Turning his back on jackals would have stung them to worse dishonor. He would not have turned his back on jackals, he would have driven them before him.

IT BEGAN to occur to the men that they once made me go-between, and that it was my business to speak up for them now. Many of them looked toward me. They began to urge me. Yet I feared to speak up lest I say the wrong thing. Once it had not been difficult to pretend I took the men's part against Ranjoor Singh, but that was no longer easy.

"What is your will?" said I at last, for Ranjoor Singh continued to keep his back turned, and Gooja Singh and Ramnarain were seeking to forestall each other. Anim Singh and Chatar Singh both strode up to me.

"Tell him we will have none of such plunder as that!" they both said.

"Is that your will?" I asked the nearest men, and they said "Aye!" So I went along the line quickly, repeating the question, and they all agreed. I even asked Tugendheim, and he was more emphatic than the rest.

"Sahib!" I called to Ranjoor Singh. "We are one in this matter. We will have none of such plunder as that below!"

He turned himself about, not quickly, but as one who is far from satisfied.

"So-ho! None of *such* plunder!" said he.

Digitized by Google

"What kind of plunder, then? What is the difference between the sorts of plunder in a stricken land?"

Gooja Singh answered him, and I was content that he should, for not only did I not know the answer myself but I was sure that the question was a trap for the unwary.

"We will plunder Turks, not wretches such as these!" said Gooja Singh.

"Aha!" said Ranjoor Singh, unfolding his arms and folding them again, beginning to stand truculently, as if his patience were wearing thin. "Ye will let the Turks rob the weak ones, in order that ye may rob the Turks! That is a fine point of honor! Ye poor lost fools! Have ye no better vision than that? Can ye draw no finer hairs? And yet ye dare offer to dictate to me, and to tell me whether I am true or not! The Raj is well served if ye are its best soldiers!"

He spat once, and turned his back again.

"We have said we will have no such plunder!" shouted Gooja Singh, but he did not so much as acknowledge the words even by a movement of the head.

Then Gooja Singh went whispering with certain of the men, those who from the first had been most partial to him, and presently I saw they were agreed on a course. He stood forward with a new question.

"Tell us whither you are leading," he demanded. "Tell us the plan."

Ranjoor Singh faced about.

"In order that Gooja Singh may interfere and spoil the plan?" he asked, and Ramnarain Singh laughed very loud at that, many of the troopers joining. That made Gooja Singh angry, and he grew rash.

"How shall we know," he asked, "whither you lead or whether you be true or not?"

"As to whither I lead," said Ranjoor Singh, "God knows that better than I. At least I have led you into no traps yet. And as to whether I am true or not, it is enough that each should know his own heart. I am for the Raj!"

And he drew his saber swiftly, came to the salute, and kissed the hilt. Then I spoke up, for I saw my opportunity.

"So are we for the Raj!" said I. "We too, sahib!" And it was with difficulty then that I restrained the men from bursting into cheers.

Ranjoor Singh held his hand up, and we daffadars flung ourselves along the line commanding silence. A voice or two—even a dozen men talking—were inaudible, but the Turks would have heard a cheer.

"Ye?" said Ranjoor Singh. "Ye for the Raj? I thought ye were all for loot?"

"Nay!" said Gooja Singh, for he saw his position undermined and began to grow fearful for consequences. "We are all for the Raj, and all were for the Raj from the first. It is you who are doubtful!"

He thought to arouse feeling again but the contrast between the one man and the other had been too strong, and none gave him any backing. Ranjoor Singh laughed.

"Have a care, Gooja Singh!" he warned. "I promised you court-martial and reduction to the ranks should I see fit! To your place in the rear!"

So Gooja Singh slunk back to his place behind the men and I judged him more likely than ever to be dangerous, although for the moment overcome. But Ranjoor Singh had not finished yet.

"Then on one point we are agreed," he said.

"We will make the most of that. Let us salute our own loyalty to India, and the British, and the Allies, with determination to give one another credit at least for that in future! Pre—sent Arms!"

So we presented arms, he kissing the hilt of his saber again; and it was not until three days afterward that I overheard one of the troopers saying that Gooja Singh had called attention to the fact of its being a German saber. For the moment there was no more doubt among us; and if Gooja Singh had not begun to be so fearful lest Ranjoor Singh take vengeance on him there never would have been doubt again. We felt warm, like men who had come in under cover from the cold.

It was growing dusk by that time, and Ranjoor Singh bade us at once return to where the horses and Syrians waited in the hollow, he himself continuing to sit alone on the summit of the ridge, considering matters. We had no idea what he would do next, and none dared ask him, although many of the men urged me to go and ask. But at nightfall he came striding down to us and left us no longer in doubt, for he ordered girths tightened and ammunition inspected.

The Syrians had no part in that night's doings. They were bidden wait in the shadow of the ridge, with mules inspanned, and with Tugendheim in charge we trusted them to guard our Turkish prisoners. Tugendheim bit his nails and made as if to pull

Digitized by Google

his mustache out by the roots, but we suffered no anxiety on his account; his safety and ours were one. He had no alternative but to obey.

Before the moon rose we sent our unmounted men to the top of the ridge under Chatar Singh, and the rest of us rode in a circuit, through a gap that Ranjoor Singh had found, to the plain on the far side.

The Turks had driven their convoy into the desert and had camped behind them, nearly three hundred strong. They had made one big fire and many little ones, and looked extremely cheerful, what with the smell of cooking and the dancing flame. Their horses were picketed together in five lines with only a few guards, so that their capture was an easy matter.

We caught them entirely by surprise and fell on them from three sides at once, our foot-men from the ridge delivering such a hot fire that some of us were hit. I looked long for the Turk who had fouled the water, and for the other one who had lanced the child's body, but failed to identify either of them. I found two who looked like them, crawling out from under a heap of slain, and shot them through the head; but as to whether I slew the right ones or not I do not know.

Three officers we made prisoner, making five that we had to care for. The other officers were slain. We never knew how few or how many Turks escaped under cover of darkness, but I suspect not more than a dozen or two at the most. Whatever tale they told when they got home again it is pretty certain they gave the Kurds the blame, for how should they suppose us to be anything except Kurds?

We took no loot except the horses and rifles. We stacked the rifles in a cart, picked the best horses, taking twenty-five spare ones with us, and gave our worst horses to the Armenians to eat. We sent a few Syrians in a hurry to warn the Armenians in the desert against those Kurds who had ridden to the south to intercept them, and tipped out two cartfuls of corn that we could ill spare, putting our wounded in the empty carts. We had one-and-twenty wounded, many of them by our own riflemen.

Then we rode on into the night, Ranjoor Singh urging us to utmost speed. The Armenians begged us to remain with them, or to take them with us. Some clung to our stirrups, but we had to shake them loose. For what could we do more than we had done for them? Should we die with them in the desert, serving neither them nor us? We gave them the best advice we could and rode away. We bade them eat, and scatter, and hide. And I hope they did.

We rode on, laughing to think that Kurds would be blamed for our doings, and wondering whether the Armenians had enough spirit left to make use of the loot we did not touch. Some of us had lances now; a few had sabers; all had good mounts and saddles. We were likely to miss the corn we had given away; but to offset that we had a new confidence in Ranjoor Singh that was beyond price, and I sang as I rode. I sang the Anand, our Sikh hymn of joy. I knew we were a regiment again at last.

CHAPTER VII

Boasting is the noise fools make to conceal from themselves their failings—*Ranjoor Singh.*

DID the sahib ever chance to hear that Persian proverb—*Duzd ne giriftah padshah ast*? No? It means "The uncaught thief is king." Ho, but thenceforward that was a campaign that suited us! None could catch us, for we could come and go like the night wind, and the Turks are heavy on their feet. We helped ourselves to what we needed. And a reputation began to hurry ahead of us that made matters easier, for our numbers multiplied in men's imagination.

The Turks whom we had recently defeated gave Kurds the credit for it, and after the survivors had crawled back home whole Turkish regiments were ordered out by telegraph to hunt for raiding Kurds, not us! We cut all the wires we could find uncut, real Kurds having attended to the business already in most instances, and now, instead of slipping unseen through the land we began to leave our signature, and do deliberate damage.

None can beat Sikhs at such warfare as we waged across the breadth of Asiatic Turkey, and none could beat Ranjoor Singh as leader at it. We could outride the Turks, outwit them, outfight them, and outdare them.

As the Spring advanced the weather improved and our spirits rose; and, as we began to take the offensive more and more, our confidence increased in Ranjoor Singh

Digitized by Google

until there might never have been any doubt of him, except that Gooja Singh was too conscious of his own faults to dare let matters be. He was ever on the watch for a chance to make himself safe at Ranjoor Singh's expense. He was a good enough soldier when so minded.

All of us daffadars were developing into very excellent troop commanders, and he not least of us; but the more efficient he grew the more dangerous he was, for the very good reason that Ranjoor Singh scorned to take notice of his hate and only praised him for efficiency. Whereas he watched all the time for faults in Ranjoor Singh to take advantage of them.

So I took thought, and used discretion, and chose twelve troopers whom I drafted into Gooja Singh's command by twos and threes, he not suspecting. By ones and twos and threes I took them apart and tested them, saying much the same to each. Said I:

"Who mistrusts our sahib any longer?" And because I had chosen them well they each made the same answer.

"Nay," said they, "we were fools. He was always truer than any of us. He surrendered in that trench that we might live for some such work as this!"

"If he were to be slain," said I, "what would now become of us?"

"He must not be slain!" said they.

"But what if he *is* slain?" I answered. "Who knows his plans for the future?"

"Ask him to tell his plans," said they. "He trusts you more than any of us. Ask and he will tell."

"Nay," said I, "I have asked and he will not tell. He knows, as well as you or I, that not all the men of this regiment have always believed in him. He knows that none dare kill him unless they know his plans first, for until they have his plans how can they dispense with his leadership?"

"Who are these who wish to kill him?" said they. "Let there be court-martial and a hanging!"

"Nay," said I, "let there be a silence and forgetting, lest too many be involved!"

They nodded, knowing well that not one man of us all would escape condemnation if inquiry could be carried back far enough.

"Let there be much watchfulness!" said I.

"Who shall watch Ranjoor Singh?" said they. "He is here, there and everywhere! He is gone before dawn, and perhaps we see him again at noon, but probably not until night. And half the night he spends in the saddle as often as not. Who shall watch him?"

"True!" said I. "But if we took thought, and decided who might—perhaps—most desire to kill him for evil recollection's sake, then we might watch and prevent the deed."

"Aye!" said they, and they understood.

So I arranged with Ranjoor Singh to have them transferred to Gooja Singh's troop, making this excuse and that and telling everything except the truth about it. If I had told him the truth Ranjoor Singh would have laughed and my precaution would have been wasted; but having lied I was enabled to ride on with easier mind—such sometimes being the case.

We had little trouble in keeping on the horizon whenever we sighted Turks in force; and then probably the distance deceived them into thinking us Turks too, for we rode now with no less than five Turkish officers as well as a German sergeant. And in the rear of large bodies of Turks there was generally a defenseless town or village, whose Armenians had all been butchered, and whose other inhabitants were mostly too gorged with plunder to show any fight. We helped ourselves to food, clothing, horses, saddlery, horse-feed, and anything else that Ranjoor Singh considered we might need, but he threatened to hang the man who plundered anything of personal value to himself, and none of us wished to die by that means.

We soon began to need medicines and a doctor badly, for we lost no less than eight-and-twenty killed between the avenging of those Armenians in the desert and reaching the Kurdish Mountains, and once we had more than forty wounded at one time. But finally we captured a Greek doctor, attached to the Turkish army, and with him two mule-loads of medicines. Ranjoor Singh promised him seven deaths for every one of our wounded men who should die of neglect, and most of them began to recover very quickly.

If we had tried merely to plunder or to raid the same place twice; or if we had rested merely because we were weary; or if we had once done what might have been expected of us, I should not now sit beneath this tree talking to you, sahib, because my bones would be lying in Asiatic Turkey. But we

Digitized by Google

rode zigzag-wise, very often doubling on our tracks, Ranjoor Singh often keeping half a day's march ahead of us gathering information.

When we raided a town or village we used to tie our Turkish officers hand and feet and cover them up in a cart for we wished them to be mistaken for Kurds, not Turks. And in almost the first bazaar we plundered were strange hats such as Kurds wear, that gave us when we wore them in the dark the appearance, perhaps, of Kurds who had stolen strange garments—for the Kurds wear quite distinctive clothes, of which we did not succeed in plundering sufficient to disguise us all.

In more than one town we had to fight for what we took, for there were Turkish soldiers that we did not know about, for all Ranjoor Singh's good scouting. Sometimes we beat them off with very little trouble; sometimes we had about enough fighting to warm our hearts and terrify the inhabitants. But in one town we were caught plundering the bazaar by several hundred Turkish infantry who entered from the far side unexpectedly; and if we had not burned the bazaar I doubt that we should have won clear of that trap. But the smoke and flame served us for a screen, and we got to the rear of the Turks and killed a number of them before galloping off into the dark.

But who shall tell in a day what took weeks in the doing? I do not remember the tenth part of it! We rode, and we skirmished, and we plundered, growing daily more proud of Ranjoor Singh, and most of us forgetting we had ever doubted him. Once we rode for ten miles side-by-side in the darkness with a Turkish column that had been sent to hunt for us!

Perhaps they mistook our squeaky old carts for their cannon, that had camped for the night unknown to them!

Next day we told some Kurds where to find the cannon, and doubtless the Kurds made trouble. We let the column alone, for it was too big for us—about two regiments, I think. They camped at midnight, and we rode on.

We gave our horses all the care we could, but that was none too much, and we had to procure new mounts very frequently. Often we picked up a dozen at a time in the towns and villages, slaying those we left behind lest they be of use to the enemy. Once we wrought a miracle, being nearly at a standstill from hard marching, and almost surrounded by regiments sent out to cut us off. So we raided the horse-lines of a Turkish regiment that had camped beside a stream, securing all the horses we needed and stampeding the remainder! Thus we escaped through the gap that regiment had been supposed to close. We got away with their baked bread, too, enough to last us at least three days! That was not far from Diarbekr.

By the time we reached the Tigris and crossed it near Diarbekr we were happy men; for we were not in search of idleness; all most of us asked was a chance to serve our friends; and making trouble for the Turks was surely service! One way and another we made more trouble than ten times our number could have made in Flanders! Every one of us but Gooja Singh was happy.

We crossed the Tigris in the dark, and some of us were nearly drowned, owing to the horses being frightened. We had to abandon our carts, so we burned them; and by the light of that fire we saw great mounds of Turkish supplies, that they intended to float down the river to Bagdad on strange rafts made of goat-skins. The sentries guarding the stores put up a little fight, and five more of us were wounded, but finally we burned the stores, and the flames were so bright and high that we had to gallop for two miles before we could be safe again in darkness.

So we crossed at a rather bad place, and there was something like panic for ten minutes, but we got over safely in the end, wounded and all. We floated the wounded men and ammunition and rations for men and horses across on some of those strange goat-skin rafts, that go round and round and anyway but forward. We found them in the long grass by the river bank.

At a town on the far side we seized new carts, far better than our old ones. And then, because we might have been expected to continue eastward, we turned to the south and followed the course of the Tigris, straight into Kurdish country, where it did us no good to resemble either Turks or Kurds; for we could not hope to deceive the Kurds into thinking we were of their tribe, and Turks and Kurds are open enemies wherever the Turks are not strong enough to overawe. They were all Kurds in these

Digitized by Google

parts, and no Turks at all, so that our problem became quite different. After two days' riding over what was little else than wilderness Ranjoor Singh made new dispositions, and we put the Kurdish headgear in our knapsacks.

IN THE first place the wounded had been suffering severely from the long forced marches and the jolting of the springless carts. Some of them had died, and the Greek doctor had grown very anxious for his own skin. Ranjoor Singh summoned him and heard great explanations and excuses, finally gravely permitting him to live but adding solemn words of caution. Then he ordered the carts abandoned for there was now no road at all.

The forty Turkish soldiers—in their Syrian clothes—were made to carry the wounded in stretchers we improvised, until some got well and some died; those who did not carry wounded were made to carry ammunition, and some of our own men who had tried to disregard Ranjoor Singh's strict orders regarding women of the country were made to help them. That arrangement lasted until we came to a village where the Kurds were willing to exchange mules against the rifles we had taken from the Turks, one mule for one rifle, we refusing to part with any cartridges.

After that the wounded had to ride on mules, some of them two to a mule, holding each other on; and the cartridge-boxes were packed on the backs of other mules, except that men who tried to make free with native women were invariably ordered to relieve a mule. Then we had no further use for the forty Turks, so we turned them loose with enough food to enable them to reach Diarbekr if they were economical. They went off none too eagerly in their Syrian clothes, and I have often wondered whether they ever reached their destination for the Kurds of those parts are a fierce people, and it is doubtful which they would rather ill-treat and kill, a Turk or a Syrian. The Turks have taught them to despise Armenians and Syrians, but they despise Turks naturally—all this I learned from Abraham, who often marched beside me.

"Those Turks we have released will go back and set their people on our trail," said Gooja Singh, overlooking no chance to throw discredit.

"If they ever get safely back, that is what I hope they will do!" Ranjoor Singh answered. "We will disturb hornets that Turks may get stung!"

He would give no explanation, but it was not long before we all understood. Little by little he was admitting us to confidence in those days, never telling too much at a time but enough to arouse interest and hope.

Rather than have him look like a Turk any longer we had dressed up Abraham in the uniform of one of our dead troopers; and when at last a Kurdish chief rode up with a hundred men at his back and demanded to know our business Ranjoor Singh called Abraham to interpret. We could easily have beaten a mere hundred Kurds, but to have won a skirmish just then would have helped us almost as little as to lose one. What we wanted was free leave to ride forward.

"Whence are you, and whither are ye bound? What seek ye?" the Kurd demanded, and Ranjoor Singh proved equal to the occasion.

"We be troops from India," said he. "We have been fighting in Europe on the side of France and England, and the Germans and Turks have been so badly beaten that you see for yourself what is happening. Behold us! We are an advance party. These Turkish officers you see are prisoners we have taken on our way. Behold, we have also a German prisoner! You will find all the Turks between here and Syria in a state of panic, and if plunder is what you desire you would better make haste and get what you can before the great armies come eating the land like locusts! Plunder the Turks and prove yourselves the friends of French and English!"

Sahib, those Kurds would rather loot than go to Heaven, and like all wild people they are very credulous. There are Kurds and Kurds and Kurds, nations within a nation, speaking many dialects of one tongue. Some of them are half-tame and live on the plains; those the Turks are able to draft into their armies to some extent. Some of the plainsmen, like those I speak of now, are altogether wild and will not serve the Turks on any terms. And most of the hillmen prefer to shoot a Turk on sight. I would rather fight a pig with bare hands than try to stand between a Kurd and Turkish plunder, and it only needed just those few words of Ranjoor Singh's to set that part of the world alight!

Digitized by Google

We rode for very many days after that, following the course of the Tigris unmolested. The tale Ranjoor Singh told had gone ahead of us. The village Kurds waited to have one look, saw our Turkish prisoners and our Sikh turbans, judged for themselves, and were off! I believe we cost the Turkish garrisons in those parts some grim fighting; and if any Turks were on our trail I dare wager they met a swarm or two of hornets more than they bargained for!

Instead of having to fight our way through that country, we were well received. Wherever we found Kurds, either in tents or in villages, the unveiled women would give us "du" as they call their curds and whey, and barley for our horses, and now and then a little bread. When other persuasion failed we could buy almost anything they had with a handful or two of cartridges. They were a savage people, but not altogether unpleasing.

Once, where the Tigris curved and our road brought us near the banks, by a high cliff past which the river swept at very great speed, we took part in a sport that cost us some cartridges, but no risk, and gave us great amusement. The Kurds of those parts, having heard in advance of our tale of victory, had decided to take the nearest loot to hand; so they had made an ambuscade down near the river level, and when we came on the scene we lent a hand from higher up.

Rushing down the river at enormous speed—for the stream was narrow there, forced between rocks with a roar and much white foam—the goat-skin rafts kept coming on their way to Mosul and Bagdad, some loaded with soldiers, some with officers, and all with goods on which the passengers must sit to keep their legs dry. The rafts were each managed by two men, who worked long oars to keep them in mid-current, they turning slowly round and round.

The mode of procedure was to volley at them, shooting if possible the men with oars, but not despising a burst goat-skin bag. In case the men with oars were shot the others would try to take their place and, being unskilful, would very swiftly run the raft against a rock, when it would break up and drown its passengers, the goods drifting ashore at the bend in the river in due time.

On the other hand when a few goat-skin bags were pierced the raft would begin to topple over and the men with oars would themselves direct the raft toward the shore, preferring to take their chance among Kurds than with the rocks that stuck up like fangs out of the raging water. No, sahib, I could not see what happened to them after they reached shore. That is a savage country.

One of our first volleys struck a raft so evenly and all together that it blew up as if it had been torpedoed! We tried again and again to repeat that performance, until Ranjoor Singh checked us for wasting ammunition. It was very good sport. There were rafts and rafts and rafts—kyaks, I think they call them—and the amount of plunder those Kurds collected on the beach must have been astonishing.

We gave the city of Mosul a very wide berth, for that is the largest city of those parts, with a very large Turkish garrison. Twenty miles to the north of it we captured a good convoy of mules, together with their drivers, headed toward Mosul, and the mules' loads turned out to consist of good things to eat, including butter in large quantities. We came on them in the gathering dusk, when their escort of fifty Turkish infantry had piled arms, we being totally unexpected.

So we captured the fifty rifles as well as the mules; and although the mule-drivers gave us the slip next day, and no doubt gave information about us in Mosul, that did not worry us much. We cut two telegraph wires leading toward Mosul that same night; we cut out two miles of wire in sections, riding away with it, and burned the poles.

After that, whenever we could catch a small party of men, Turks excepted—for that would have been to give the Turks more information than we could expect to get from them—Ranjoor Singh would ask questions about Wassmuss. Most of them would glance toward the mountains at mention of his name, but few had much to tell about him. However, bit by bit our knowledge of his doings and his whereabouts kept growing, and we rode forward, ever toward the mountains now, wasting no time and plundering no more than expedient.

We saw no more living Armenians on all that long journey. The Turks and Kurds had exterminated them! We rode by burned villages, and through villages that once had been half-Armenian. The non-Armenian houses would all be standing like

Digitized by Google

to burst apart with plunder, but every single one that had sheltered an Armenian family would lie in ruins. God knows why! On all our way we found no man who could tell us what those people had done to deserve such hatred. We asked, but none could tell us.

One town, through which we rode at full gallop, had Armenian bodies still lying in the streets, some of them half-burned, and there were Kurds and Turks busy plundering the houses. Some of them came out to fire at us but failed to do us any harm, and the wind being the right way, we set a light to a dozen houses at the eastward end. Two or three miles away we stopped to watch the whole town go up in flames, and laughed long at the Turks' efforts to save their loot.

As we drew near enough to the mountains to see snow and to make out the lie of the different ranges we ceased to have any fear of pursuit. There was plenty of evidence of Turkish armies not very far away; in fact at Mosul there was gathering a very great army indeed; but they were all so busy killing and torturing and hunting down Armenians that they seemed to have no time for duty on that part of the frontier. Perhaps that was why the Germans had sent Wassmuss, in order that the Turks might have more leisure to destroy their enemies at home! Who knows? There are many things about this great war to which none know the answer, and I think the fate of the Armenians is one of them.

But who thought any more of Armenians when the outer spurs of the foot-hills began to close around us? Not we at any rate. We had problems enough of our own. What lay behind us was behind, and the future was likely to afford us plenty to think about! Too many of us had fought among the slopes of the Himalayas not to know how difficult it would be for Turks to follow us; but those mountaineers, who are nearly as fierce as our mountaineers of northern India, and who have ever been too many for the Turks, were likely to prove more dangerous than anything we had met yet.

WE HAD enough food packed on our captured mules to last us for perhaps another eight days when we rode at last into a grim defile that seemed to lead between the very gate-posts of the East—two great mountains, one on either hand, barren, and ragged, and hard.

We were being led at that time by a Kurdish prisoner, who had lain by the wayside with the belly-ache. Our Greek doctor had physicked him, and he was now compelled to lead us under Ranjoor Singh's directions, with his hands made fast behind him, he riding on a mule with one of our men on either hand. By that time Ranjoor Singh had picked up enough information at different times, and had added enough of it together to know whither we must march, and the Kurd had nothing to do but obey orders.

We had scarcely ridden three hundred yards into the defile of which I speak, remarking the signs of another small body of mounted men who had preceded us, when fifty shots rang out from overhead and we took open order as if a shell had burst among us. Nobody was hit, however, and I think nobody was intended to be hit. I saw that Ranjoor Singh looked unalarmed. He beckoned for Abraham, who looked terrified, and I took Abraham by the shoulder and brought him forward. There came a wild yell from overhead, and Ranjoor Singh made Abraham answer it with something about Wassmuss. In the shouting that followed I caught the word Wassmuss many times.

Presently a Kurdish chief came galloping down, for all the world as one of our Indian mountaineers would ride, leaping his horse from rock to rock as if he and the beast were one. I rode to Ranjoor Singh's side, to protect him if need be, so I heard what followed, Abraham translating.

"Whence are ye?" said the Kurd. "And whither? And what will ye?" They are inquisitive people, and they always seem to wish to know those three things first.

"I have told you already, I ride from Farangistan (Europe) and I seek Wassmuss. These are my men," said Ranjoor Singh.

"No more may reach Wassmuss unless they have the money with them!" said the Kurd, very truculently. "Two days ago we let by the last party of men who had only words with them. Now we want only money!"

"Who was ever helped by impatience?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Nay," said the Kurd, "we are a patient folk! We have waited eighteen days for sight of this gold for Wassmuss. It should have been here fifteen days ago, so Wassmuss said, but we are willing to wait eighteen more. Until it comes, none else shall pass!"

Digitized by Google

I was watching Ranjoor Singh very closely indeed, and I saw that he saw daylight, as it were through darkness.

"Yet no gold shall come," he answered, "until you and I shall have talked together, and shall have reached an agreement."

"Agreement?" said the Kurd. "Ye have my word. Ride back and bid them bring their gold in safety and without fear!"

"Without fear?" said Ranjoor Singh. "Then who are ye?"

"We," said the Kurd, "are the escort to bring the gold in safety through the mountain passes."

"So that he may divide it among others?" asked Ranjoor Singh, and I saw the Kurd wince. "Gold is gold!" he went on. "Who art thou to let by an opportunity?"

"Speak plain words," said the Kurd.

"Here?" said Ranjoor Singh. "Here in this defile, where men might come on us from the rear at any minute?"

"That they can not do," the Kurd answered, "for my men watch from overhead."

"Nevertheless," said Ranjoor Singh, "I will speak no plain words here."

The Kurd looked long at him—at least a whole minute. Then he wiped his nose on the long sleeve of his tunic and turned about.

"Come in peace!" he said, spurring his horse.

Ranjoor Singh followed him, and we followed Ranjoor Singh, without one word spoken or order given. The Kurd led straight up the defile for a little way, then sharp to the right and up-hill along a path that wound among great boulders, until at last we halted, pack mules and all, in a bare arena formed by a high cliff at the rear and on three sides by gigantic rocks that fringed it, making a natural fort.

The Kurd's men were mostly looking out from between the rocks, but some of them were sprawling in the shadow of a great boulder in the midst, and some were attending to the horses that stood tethered in a long line under the cliff at the rear. The chief drove away those who lay in the shadow of the boulder in the midst, and bade Ranjoor Singh and me and Abraham be seated.

Ranjoor Singh called the other daffadars, and we all sat facing the Kurd, with Abraham a little to one side between him and us, to act interpreter. That was the first time Ranjoor Singh had taken so many at once into his confidence and I took it for a good sign, although unable to ignore a twinge of jealousy.

"Now?" said the Kurd. "Speak plain words!"

"You have not yet offered us food," said Ranjoor Singh.

The Kurd stared hard at him, eye to eye.

"I have good reason," he answered. "By our law, he who eats our bread can not be treated as an enemy. If I feed you, how can I let my men attack you afterward?"

"You could not," said Ranjoor Singh. "We too have a law, that he with whom we have eaten salt is not enemy but friend. Let us eat bread and salt together, then, for I have a plan."

"A plan?" said the Kurd. "What manner of plan? I await gold. What are words?"

"A good plan," said Ranjoor Singh.

"And on the strength of an empty boast am I to eat bread and salt with you?" the Kurd asked.

"If you wish to hear the plan," said Ranjoor Singh. "To my enemy I tell nothing; however, let my friend but ask!"

The Kurd thought a long time, but we facing him added no word to encourage or confuse him. I saw that his curiosity increased the more the longer we were silent; yet I doubt whether his was greater than my own! Can the sahib guess what Ranjoor Singh's plan was? Nay, that Kurd was no great fool. He was in the dark. He saw swiftly enough when explanations came.

"I have three hundred mounted men!" the Kurd said at last.

"And I near as many!" answered Ranjoor Singh. "I crave no favors! I come with an offer, as one leader to another!"

The Kurd frowned and hesitated but sent at last for bread and salt for all our party, except that he ordered his men to give none to our prisoners and none to the Syrians, whom he mistook for Turkish soldiers. If Ranjoor Singh had told him they were Syrians he would have refused the more, for Kurds regard Syrians as wolves regard sheep.

"Let the prisoners be," said Ranjoor Singh, "but feed those others! They must help put through the plan!"

So the Kurd ordered the Syrians fed too, and we dipped the flat bread—something like our Indian chupatties—into salt, and ate, facing one another.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Digitized by Google

THE BRIDGING OF MALBERT SWAMP

by James Francis Dwyer

Author of "Cha-Cha and Her Kitten," "The Mirrors of the World," etc.

A WISE President has written that the great West was opened up with bones. He was speaking of the brave pioneers who lost their lives in the battle with trackless prairie and sun-whitened desert. Many of those trail-blazers are forgotten but the names of a number are kept before our eyes. For instance, Matthew Galt, known as "Daredevil" Matt.

On the entrance arch of the great nine-mile bridge of steel that spans the Malbert Swamp is a brass plate with an inscription concerning Matthew. The inscription runs:

To the Memory of "Daredevil" Matt Galt, one-time Pony Express rider in the employ of Russell, Majors and Waddell. He lost his life in an attempt to find a trail through this swamp while carrying the United States mail from Carson's Sump to Quaking Asp. January 12, 1861.

The wonderful bridge was built by Darrell Galt, President of the Galt System, and son of Daredevil Matt. Darrell Galt built the bridge thirty-eight years after the Pony Express rider and his mustang were swallowed up in the black slime. With the indomitable spirit of the West, the West that Matt Galt knew in its raw infancy, his son flung three leagues of steel across the treacherous morass so that his big-chested, snorting, iron stallions of the Galt System could pound out a thunderous requiem to the brave man who slept beneath the beds of stunted reeds.

The old trail-making spirit that possessed Daredevil Matt had descended upon his son. Darrell Galt found towns that were lonely and linked them to other towns with shining rails of steel. He discovered stretches of prairie and desert and laid down racing tracks for his coal-eating stud. Across the blue sky of the Land of Big Distances he hung a smoke wreath made by his flying engines—a wreath to the god of Commerce, and over the country where the mails were once carried by reckless riders, like "Bill" Cody, "Pony Bob," "Little Yank," "Mel" Baughn and two score others, famous in the annals of the Pony Express, stretched a web of steel called the Galt System.

Darrell Galt was fifty years of age when he thought of putting a bridge over Malbert Swamp. The lazy vicious stretch annoyed him. It sprawled in the hot sun, an insolent unclean thing that brought terror to the white roads that approached its quaking mud banks and then turned swiftly as if sensing danger. It was a challenge to Darrell Galt and the Galt System.

Galt sent for his chief engineer, a silent cold-faced man named Morgan, and the railroad king led the engineer to the edge of the swamp.

"Morgan," said Galt, "I'm going to run a line from Carson's Sump to Quaking Asp and I'm going to take it over this swamp."

The big engineer was startled. For three

Digitized by Google

minutes he stared at the black mud, the green slime patches and the beds of black reeds where legions of snakes lived unmolested, then he spoke.

"It'll be a big job, Chief," he drawled. "This Malbert Swamp is a nasty spot. We could take the line around the top of the swamp——"

"I want to take it over the swamp!" interrupted Galt. "Do you understand me? Over it!"

The chief engineer of the Galt System looked at the gray eyes of his employer and waited for more information. And the information came.

"Listen," said Galt. "My father lost his life trying to cross Malbert Swamp when the Indians had hemmed him in, and after his death my mother came across a piece of poetry that he wrote. I guess he wrote it. It's in his handwriting, and it seems as if this swamp had made him a little scared of it long before it got him. I'll read it to you."

Darrell Galt took a time-stained scrap of paper from his pocket and read the lines aloud. The poem ran:

Beware the black swamp 'neath the hill,
Don't halt your mustang near it;
It scares the herds of buffalo,
The goldarned Injuns fear it.
So if you'd like to live and play
Don't cross but ride 'round Carson way.

I see it in the gray, gray dawns,
A fearsome thing to scare me,
I see it in the hot, hot noons,
It's black mud stretches dare me.
Some day, perhaps, I and my "hoss"
Will call its bluff and ride across.

Darrell Galt slowly folded up the scrap of paper and put it back in his wallet. He looked at Morgan and spoke.

"He called its bluff one night when the Utes had murdered the station man at Carson's Sump," he said, "and the swamp beat him. That's why I'm going to straddle it with steel to show it that Daredevil Matt wasn't the last of the Galts!"

The chief engineer remained silent for a long time, his eyes upon the poisonous haze that rose from the mud banks. He spoke at last.

"If you want to do it, Chief, it's going to be done," he said. "And I like you for doing it. It's a big job though, but if I die before it's finished I hope my son, Jack, will have a chance at it."

After musing a moment, his half-shut eyes fixed upon a quivering knoll of vivid green that rose out of the mud, he spoke again.

"That's the best of having a son, Chief. If you tackle anything real big he can finish it up if you drop out of the race. Look at you. Now you're going to take up a job your father started and put a steel surcingle on this durned swamp. When will we tackle it?"

"Tomorrow," snapped Galt. "Get at it tomorrow. Take every man you want and push things hard."

Darrell Galt went back to his home and told the Dream Woman of his plans. He had been married to her for five wonderful years during which the Galt System had progressed by leaps and bounds. She had breathed the breath of love upon his dreams and they had become deeds.

Sitting together he read to her the poem written by Daredevil Matt Galt and he told her that the big work was to be started on the following day. The Dream Woman was delighted. She read the verses again and again and clapped her hands excitedly.

"Oh, it's splendid!" she cried. "It's splendid to think of you, his son, putting a bridge over the place which he tried vainly to cross!"

Galt, at that moment, was reminded of what Morgan had said earlier in the afternoon. It was splendid for a son to take up a work which his father had not completed, but as Galt thought over the remarks of the big engineer he wondered if he had not waited too long in beginning the bridge over Malbert Swamp. He, Darrell Galt, was fifty years of age, and the job would be a long one. And he, unlike Morgan, had no son to complete unfinished jobs and act as studmaster to the racing Moguls of the Galt System.

The Dream Woman saw the shadow flit across the face of her husband and she questioned him softly.

"What is it, sweetheart?" she murmured.

"Nothing," he answered. "Nothing."

But in the minutes that followed his denial the probe of love found the great longing that was hidden in the heart of the railroad man.

"Little wife, I didn't mean that!" he cried after he had stammeringly told her of the fear that had come upon him lest the bridge would not be completed before he

Digitized by Google

died. "Please forgive me! It was Morgan's remark that made me think. He spoke of his son and—and I had a foolish thought——"

"Listen, love," she murmured, seizing his hand and interrupting him. "Put your head down closer to me. Closer still, Darrell! I—I have something to tell you, something that—that I must whisper into your ear."

Darrell Galt, with his head close to the lips of the Dream Woman, listened to the secret she breathed to him, and the light that came into his eyes seemed to be the reflection of a soul that had suddenly burst into flame. His hard fighting face became sweet and lovable and his strong hands trembled as he stroked the wonderfully white and shapely hands of the woman he loved.

"Sweetheart, my father was one of the bravest men in the world! When I read that verse today I hated Malbert Swamp! I hated it! It beat dad, but I'll fix it!"

The Dream Woman had Daredevil Matt's verses in her hands and she made a slight change in the last two lines and chanted the words softly to her husband.

> Some day, perhaps, on an iron "hoss,"
> I'll call its bluff and ride across.

"You will, Darrell," she cried. "Oh you will!"

Darrell Galt smiled and kissed her little fingers. He felt supremely happy. Perhaps he, like the big engineer, would have a son to take up the great work if he died before it was completed.

II

DAREDEVIL MATT GALT had had every reason to be afraid of Malbert Swamp. Its miles of black mud, quivering green tussocks, brackish water and reed beds bred a terror that sprang upon all who approached it. Morgan, the engineer, and his band of assistants experienced the feeling as they arrived to map out a bed for the great piers of masonry that would support the steel bridge.

"Darned wicked looking spot," said one.

"Looks as if it would bite you," growled another. "I'd take the line fifty miles around before I'd run it over this place. Bet we go half-way down to China before we get anything solid enough to support a stale cruller."

Morgan and his assistants attacked Malbert Swamp quietly and methodically. They rode around it like experienced dissectors who had before them on the dissecting table some extraordinary prehistoric monster. They prodded it carefully, driving long rods down into the black slime that boiled and bubbled. They paddled over the brackish water in flat-bottomed boats and ran fathoms of rope into the depths. Swiftly, yet carefully and accurately, they measured the place seeking a foundation for the big piers.

But Malbert Swamp was old and vicious. It protested against Darrell Galt's attempt to shackle it. It squirmed and wriggled, destroying weeks of labor and whole pyramids of calculations by suddenly throwing before the probing battalion a bottomless stretch when they were congratulating themselves that they had at last found a safe bed.

Darrell Galt came to encourage Morgan and his weary assistants. Galt's intention to bridge the swamp, and the swamp's evident antagonism to a bridge were attracting attention. The job was considered a stupendous undertaking, and as the motive behind it gradually became known the West rose up and watched the work.

The newspapers dragged out of the past the doings of the Pony Express riders, whose exploits make one of the most picturesque and colorful chapters in American history. They told of Daredevil Matt and the brave reckless men who had hurled the mail from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, over two thousand miles of lonely country, defying floods and storms, prairie fires and hostile Indians. Daredevil Matt's verses were published, and a newspaper man at Carson's Sump wrote a poem in the same meter, a verse of which ran:

> I see it in the morning light,
> The black swamp bridged and shackled.
> I see the spans of steel above
> The mud "Daredevil" tackled,
> I hear the thundering Moguls pound
> Above the slime where Matt sleeps sound.

Darrell Galt and the big engineer conferred regarding the difficulties which confronted Morgan and his men.

"What's wrong?" questioned the road-maker.

The engineer, mud-caked and tired, glared at the swamp for a few moments

Digitized by Google

then he turned to his employer and spoke in a throaty whisper.

"It's a cussed spot, Chief," said Morgan. "It's mean, real mean!"

"I know it is," snapped Galt, "but we're going to bridge it."

The engineer pointed to a slime-covered patch about a hundred yards from the spot where they were standing.

"We bottomed there with three fathoms of rope five days ago," he said. "Yesterday we couldn't touch the mud with fifteen fathoms! Seems as if the darned thing knew what we were attempting and was playing tricks on us."

Darrell Galt was silent a moment, then he spoke hurriedly.

"Listen Morgan," he cried, "my father is somewhere out there! His bones, I mean. He didn't drop through the earth; he loved the United States too much to leave it. And he loved the West so much that he tried to find a trail through this swamp with a pony. With a pony, Morgan! How many helpers have you got?"

"Seventy-three, Chief."

"With boats and horses and gear!" cried Galt. "Go to it, Morgan! If I can't put a bridge over this swamp I'll never be able to face my father on Judgment Day!"

Darrell Galt returned home and told the Dream Woman of the difficulties that were to be overcome, and the Dream Woman comforted him.

"You will succeed, sweetheart," she murmured. "Malbert Swamp will never beat you! Why, Darrell, you can do anything!"

Galt blushed under her praise and kissed the fingers of the hand which she placed upon his arm.

"I was reading today," she continued, "of an Arab chief who came to Tlemcen and I thought of you. I thought of all the lonely little towns that you had linked together, and I believed that if they were able to greet you they would greet you in the manner Tlemcen greeted the Arab Sheik. Here is the book. I will read it to you. It is the words of the Sheik."

Tlemcen lifted up its veil and spoke to me, smiling upon me with all its little windowed eyes as a beautiful woman smiles upon her lover. I had come to bring deliverance to the city, to tell it news of other places, to bring into the life of its people the honey of intercourse, the messages of love, the——

The Dream Woman paused, made an attempt to reach Galt, then dropped back upon the couch.

Darrell Galt sprang to her side.

"What is it?" he cried. "Are you ill?"

"I am a little faint," she whispered. "Hold me, Darrell, I think I am going to swoon."

Four hours later a son was born to Darrell Galt, but the life of the Dream Woman was taken in exchange for the small pink infant for whose coming the great road-maker had longed.

A few minutes before the Dream Woman had slipped away into the Great Beyond her lips moved softly as she looked up into the gray eyes of her husband.

"Good-by, sweetheart," she whispered. "I—I am happy. You have a son to—to mind the iron horses when you grow tired. Call him Matthew and—take him with you over Malbert Swamp on the day you open the bridge. Perhaps, sweetheart, perhaps I shall be near you both."

An hour after she died Darrell Galt received a telegram from Morgan, and the Dream Woman not being there to hear the great news, Galt, with streaming eyes, read the words to the pink infant upon the bed. The telegram read:

We've beat it. Found good track from dead oak on Carson Sump Road to point fifty yards north of shale bed near Grant's farm. Congratulations.
MORGAN.

III

THE direct line of the bridge having been settled upon, Darrell Galt moved an army of men upon Malbert Swamp. It was a swarming, ant-like army, outwardly undisciplined and yet under a discipline so perfect that its workings were imperceptible. There were battalions of bricklayers, masons, carpenters, fitters, riveters, and mechanics of all kinds, and Galt's army attacked Malbert Swamp with the coolness and attention to detail with which a well-organized army would attack a citadel. Up from the banks of the swamp went the hum of ceaseless toil, the throb of endeavor, of unrelaxed effort to perform something clearly outlined and blue-printed for definite accomplishment.

Into monster caissons built where the eight-score piers would spring defiantly out of the slime, were tipped tons of concrete, and Morgan grinned as he watched

Digitized by Google

the puffing construction engines drag up trucks of cement-and-stone goulash to tip into the maw of the swamp.

"That'll give her indigestion," growled Galt's lieutenant. "It might have been an easy job to swallow the Chief's old man but a few million tons of concrete is a different matter."

Morgan had begun to look upon Malbert Swamp as a personal enemy, sentient, watchful, ready to take immediate advantage of any blunder which he or his assistants might make. He had difficulty in controlling a curious fear of the place, a fear which came at times when he watched the black mud boil and bubble under the forced feeding of the concrete workers. Once through the sudden collapse of a scaffolding a donkey-engine dived into the slime, and the suddenness with which the engine disappeared, together with the celerity exhibited by the swamp in hiding all trace of the disappearance, thrilled him.

"The swine!" he growled, as the last fat, vicious-looking air bubble broke upon the surface. "The hungry swine!"

But the great work continued in spite of the efforts of the swamp to retard it. Out of the slime and the reed beds like monster stalks rose the stone piers, a long grenadier-like line that went proudly across the swamp, and upon these piers the legion of ironworkers began to plait the web of steel upon which the Moguls of the Galt System would beat out a mighty diapason in memory of Daredevil Matt. In the haze that hung over the swamp the spider-like structure of shining steel grew and grew as the throbbing pneumatic riveters joined plate to plate and girder to girder.

Darrell Galt made many visits to the bridge and he smiled grimly as he walked along the plank foot-bridge high above the swamp.

"Morgan," he cried, as he clung to the lattice of steel, when the bridge was nearing completion, "I wish my dad was alive for just one day! Just for the day we open this bridge! He hated any one or anything that beat him, and I'll wager if he could come to earth for twenty-four hours he'd spend the time riding backwards and forwards over the bridge to show the swamp it was bested!"

And Young Matt, the baby, was brought many times to see that monument that was being erected in honor of his dead namesake. A chubby strong child was Young Matt. He looked with the eye of a critic at the lengths of steel that sprang like living threads from pier to pier and he chortled in a manner that Darrell Galt believed was an effort to show his appreciation of the work.

On one of those trips of inspection Young Matt delighted his father by making his first conversational effort. He repeated two words which the big railroad man used in addressing Morgan and his staff, and they were particularly appropriate words for a namesake of Daredevil Matt to use.

Said Darrell Galt:

"The energy and pluck of this country of ours is not appalled by deserts, mountains, swamps or other obstructions. My father was defeated by the Malbert Swamp but the Galt System has tackled it and whipped it!"

And then Young Matt made his great hit by crying out with the full strength of his baby lungs the last two words of his father's remark.

"Whipped it!" he cried. "Whipped it!"

The opening of the Malbert Bridge was a wonderful affair. The bridge was more than a monument to Daredevil Matt. It was a monument to American courage and tireless industry.

The Governor of the State was invited to ride with Darrell Galt, Young Matt, and Morgan in the cab of the big new Mogul that was to lead the procession of Galt's stallions across the great bridge. And the line-up of the engines on the opening day extended from the earth ramp leading to the first pier, far back beyond Carson's Sump. They waited patiently, big-chested heavy-breathing monsters, ready to fling their shrieking crescendo into the grand requiem for the Pony Rider.

The track hummed as Darrell Galt, with Young Matt in his arms, climbed aboard the shining Mogul, Morgan and the Governor following. For a moment there was intense silence, then Darrell Galt motioned the engineer to place Young Matt's baby hand on the throttle.

The racket began then. The Mogul moved slowly, and ear-piercing blasts came from the long line. The stationary engines joined in the uproar, the packed crowds upon the banks cheered madly, and the Governor, leaning out of the cab, flung into the slime the key and padlock which he had taken from the barrier chain before climbing aboard.

Digitized by Google

If the spirit of Daredevil Galt was within a hundred miles of Malbert Swamp it would have heard the racket that was flung into the blue haze. It was an amazing tumult. As the Mogul thrust his buffers beyond the first pier the noise became almost deafening, and the eyes of Darrell Galt were blurred with tears as he held his boy tight in his arms and thought of the Dream Woman who had whispered that she would be close on that day. He felt that she was close. He was sure that her spirit hovered above the ponderous, slow-moving engine whose weight made the latticed steel of the superstructure join with a soft pianissimo in the great song of triumph.

At a platform on the Quaking Asp end of the bridge Darrell Galt dismounted and, still holding Young Matt, stood with Morgan at his side to watch the cheering procession go by. The head of the Galt System was much affected. He felt that the conquest of Malbert Swamp had placed a wreath upon the brows of his long dead father who had boldly attempted to cross the slime-covered stretch in the cause of civilization and progress.

"Chief," said Morgan, as the racket died down, "we've beat the swamp, but you can take it from me that it wants watching."

Darrell Galt turned quickly and gripped his lieutenant's hand.

"And I've picked a good watcher," he cried. "The best man on the Galt System."

"I'm glad," said Morgan. "It wants a man to watch it night and day and——"

"Morgan you're going to be the man!" interrupted Galt. "I'm going to make you Superintendent of the Malbert Swamp Line! You're going to watch it! You deserve a reward for what you've done, and I know you'll see that Malbert Swamp will never beat the Galt System. We've got it tied down Morgan, and I'm happy. It beat a Pony Express rider but behind the Pony Express rider was America!"

IV

YOUNG MATT grew rapidly. He was a true Galt, loving the iron stallions of the Galt System, riding on them as they went up and down pulling their car harems that hummed the Song of the Road as they followed their Mogul lovers.

A fine boy was Young Matt. He made friends with his father's employees, clean, strong men who loved Darrell Galt and were proud of the work that he had performed.

"Your daddy made these fields of corn and wheat," the engineers would say as they charged down lanes between league-wide stretches of growing crops. "Yes sir! Your daddy made 'em! This place was as bare as a hobo's dinner-plate till Darrell Galt came along. Goldurn it, people think it's the man on the land who makes the country but who put him on the land? Who put the farmer on the land? Why, men like your dad!"

And then another veteran Mogul groom would take up the tale.

"Nothing would stop him either. Look at that there Malbert Swamp Bridge that was built when you was a baby. You ask Superintendent Morgan about that bridge. They were months searching for a foundation, because the thing made holes in itself every night, but that didn't frighten your dad. It frightened Morgan though. He watches that bridge like as if it was goin' to be swallowed up some day."

And Darrell Galt who was growing grayer, very much grayer, was delighted as he watched the new studmaster who had made friends with his ready smile and democratic manners. Darrell Galt thought that Young Matt was like the long dead Daredevil after whom he had been named, and this belief was backed up by an old, old resident of Carson's Sump, who had fought the Utes in the days when the West was wide.

"Jest like his grandfather," mumbled the ancient, "long legs an' a grin an' hair as shiny as a corn tassel. Great chap was Daredevil Matt. Pity the swamp got him. Durn nasty spot. I jest make faces at it every time I ride across it goin' down to Quakin' Asp."

At seventeen Young Matt fell in love, and Darrell Galt smiled when he heard the news. Young Matt had been smitten with the charms of Lucy Morgan, the daughter of the superintendent of the Malbert Swamp Line, the man who had built the big bridge and who watched it assiduously. Darrell Galt had offered promotion to Morgan but the bridge builder had refused.

"I'd rather stay here an' watch it," he said, waving his hand toward the swamp. "It hates me and you for putting that span of steel over it an' some day it might try to hand us a crack when we're not looking. Thank you, Chief, I'll stay where I am."

Digitized by Google

And now Morgan's daughter and Young Galt were sweethearts. Lucy, a year younger than Matt, was as charming as Daphne, a sweet blue-eyed daughter of the West, modest and wholesome, a lover of sunshine and little winds and flowers.

"He couldn't do better," said Darrell Galt, when the news came to him. "I know her breeding. Her dad has worked for me for forty-nine years."

Darrell Galt went East as far as Chicago, leaving Young Matt at Carson's Sump. Young Matt was supremely happy. He was madly in love, and in the red house built high up on the rise so that Morgan could always have Malbert Swamp under close observation was the girl he loved.

And then one morning as Darrell Galt sat looking out upon the procession of automobiles in Michigan Boulevard, he received a telegram from Morgan. The wire read:

> The swamp is acting queer. Wish you were here to look at things. Treacherous movement half mile from Quaking Asp bank. Come if you can.
> MORGAN.

Darrell Galt, with a curious little fear in his heart, took the first train to the West. He tried to shake off the dread but it clung to him as the train rushed over prairie and mountain. It was with him when he leapt from the cab of one of his own engines at Quaking Asp and found Morgan waiting for him.

"What's wrong?" asked Galt.

"I'll show you," answered Morgan, leading the railroad-man down toward the swamp. "I've got a flat-bottomed boat waiting and you can look for yourself."

There were two men in the boat and they poled it swiftly along a lane of thick, black water that was hemmed in by beds of slime and reeds. Above them towered the great bridge, its shadow falling upon the swamp in a criss-cross of black lines which seemed to press down upon the mud and brackish water.

The boat was half a mile from the Quaking Asp side when Morgan put up his hand to the two rowers.

"Easy," he cautioned. "Pole her easy, Joe. Put that anchor down, Tom. It will help us if we get drawn in."

Very slowly they advanced until Darrell Galt heard, coming like a vicious undernote to the song of a freight upon the bridge, the curious choking sound made by churning mud. Over an area of half an acre the swamp was alive!

The mud was bubbling up like the lava of a volcano, creating curious eddies and little billows, rocking the green tussocks and occasionally dragging one beneath the slime as if to fill the maw of some monster that hid beneath the surface. It was a terrifying and yet a fascinating sight that held Darrell Galt's gaze.

It was Morgan's voice that brought Galt out of the semi-hypnotic state into which the view of the agitated slime had carried him.

"It's increasing," said Morgan. "It's growing bigger every minute and it's moving toward the piers!"

The truth of Morgan's words was obvious. The disturbed area was growing larger, and it was extending rapidly toward the piers of white stone that sprang up clean and strong from their bed of filth. It seemed as if the swamp were marshaling its resources and was now moving to the attack. To the amazed superintendent it seemed as if the evil thing he hated had waited for Darrell Galt's arrival before making the attack, which its previous actions hinted at.

One of the men in the boat gave a cry of alarm as a green patch some ten square yards in area which was not more than sixty feet from the party, began to rock violently and then started to slip beneath the slime. Morgan cried out to the man holding the rope attached to the anchor, while Galt seized another pole and helped in the work of getting the boat out of the disturbed area. Malbert Swamp that had destroyed Daredevil Galt was threatening his son, and threatening the work which the son had performed.

It was a mad wild pull but the four men made the shore on the Quaking Asp side, a good distance ahead of the mud billows which had pursued them. Their efforts to reach land attracted attention. Men came running from the signal towers at the end of the bridge, from a stationary freight waiting for orders, and they helped Darrell Galt and the superintendent up the bank.

"Get a hand car!" cried Galt. "Quick! Run us out on the bridge!"

V

THE sun was setting as the hand car carried the superintendent and Darrell Galt out through the steel-latticed pathway that Galt had made. Malbert Swamp looked evil and threatening

Digitized by Google

as the two men watched it. The mud was dyed crimson by the beams of the sun, and the shadow patches behind the reed beds were ink splashes in which terror lurked. Behind the hand car ran a score of men, dimly aware of the approach of some danger, yet not quite sure of what the danger was. They, unlike Morgan, did not view Malbert Swamp as a sentient enemy, vicious and watchful.

Galt and Morgan sprang from the car when a mile from the Quaking Asp side and the two rushed to the side of the bridge. The light was fading, but they could see enough to send curious thrills of terror up and down their spines. Against the great pier directly beneath them were beating waves of mud, horrible black waves that were belched up by some unseen force, and which slopped over the white stone, making a curious gurgling noise that was anything but pleasant. The two watched without speaking. The running men had overtaken the car and they too, breathing heavily, clung to the lattice of steel and watched the disturbance a hundred feet below.

Galt clutching the steel girders thought that he detected in the girders a thrill of terror. He wondered as to the power of the thing over which he had thrown a shackle of steel. What was happening to the foundation upon which the pier rested? Was the swamp eating away the great pillar of concrete, digesting the mess of stone and cement which Morgan had fed to it seventeen years before?

Galt glanced at Morgan. The superintendent's face was drawn and white as if some great fear incubating through hours and days and years had suddenly burst through the shell of common sense and stood up before him, naked, unclean, appalling!

A girder creaked and Galt seized the superintendent's arm.

"Close the bridge!" he roared. "Stop the westbound at Carson's Sump. Get back there all of you! Jump on that hand-car and get to the signal box. Block the passenger! Block everything—The——"

Darrell Galt didn't finish. Out of the gloom beneath there came to his ears an ominous sound that drove the words of the railroad-man back into his throat. Morgan dropped to his knees and peered down between the immense girders into the shadows. For a long minute, with head thrust against the iron, he looked, then he rose with a little cry of terror.

"The pier is going!" he cried, his voice thin and yet possessed of a wonderful piercing quality. "Get back! This way! Quick! The span will go! Has any one signaled the passenger——"

Morgan, stumbling back, turned and looked toward Carson's Sump. Around the curve leading down to the bridge swung two great headlights that bored through the gloom of the approaching night like the glacing eyes of an angry ogre. It seemed as if the big engine were rushing forward to see what Malbert Swamp was doing to the wonderful bridge upon which it and its brother engines played a never-ending requiem for the dauntless soul of Daredevil Matt.

Darrell Galt made a rush forward in the direction of Carson's Sump but some one gripped him round the body and held him. Galt struggled and fell to the roadbed, and as he fell there came to his ears a horrible rending sound, the clatter of falling masonry, the clash of steel against steel, and he knew what had happened. Something flashed and lit up the bridge for an instant, and Galt saw. Between him and the train was a gap, a gap that was bridged only by a tangle of telegraph wires and the parts of the light lattice work of steel!

He made another effort to free himself, but the strong arms flung him backward and pinioned him. He damned his antagonist but the unknown took no heed.

Galt heard voices that tried to soothe him. He heard the sound of Young Matt's voice. A thick voice was telling him that the train would be stopped, that some one was climbing over the broken mesh that spanned the gulf, then at last the great horror that was upon him was dispelled by a cheer that rose from those around him, and the big arms around his chest were loosened.

Galt rose and looked toward Carson's Sump. On the edge of the abyss, its big eyes blazing, its nostrils snorting as if amazed at the sight of the gulf, was the big-chested engine, while across the chasm came questioning yells and hoarse-voiced answers that raised echoes in Quaking Asp and Carson's Sump.

"Who stopped it?" gasped Galt, gripping the arm of Morgan, down whose cheeks were flowing tears of joy.

Digitized by Google

"Young Matt did!" blubbered the superintendent. "He crawled over the wires! She—she, Lucy was on the train!"

Darrell Galt wiped his brow, stood for a moment staring at Morgan, then stepped to the side of the bridge.

Five-score lights lit up the surface of the black mud, and as Galt looked down he was amazed to find that the disturbance which had wrecked the pier and torn down a hundred yards span of the wonderful bridge had come to an end. Malbert Swamp, still vicious looking, still repellant and inexpressibly weird, was quiet. Its attack had failed, another Galt, a namesake of Daredevil Matt had prevented it from swallowing the seven cars with their two hundred and twelve passengers!

"Morgan," said Galt, speaking quietly, "put a thousand men at work here tomorrow! Two thousand! Three! Get this damage cleared up as soon as possible. The Swamp can't beat us! This bridge is built on my father's bones, and the bones of dead men have made the West what the West is today. Hold on! Why wait till tomorrow? Get lights here and we'll start rebuilding the span now!"

THE SOURDOUGH TWINS' LAST CLEAN-UP

by Robert Russell Strang

Author of "Off the Trail"

SHOULD you ever visit Circle City I advise you not to inquire about two Alaskan pioneers by the names of Samuel Dobbs and Peter Gray, because the natives won't know to whom you refer; but if you respectfully mention the "Sourdough Twins" you will taste to the full the quality of northern hospitality.

Later, McDermot himself will show you the cabin that was their Winter home for twenty years; permit you to reverently touch the battered old Yukon stove; inspect Sourdough Sam's drawings of the original stampeders from the Forty-Mile to the local diggings, and even allow you to sit in their worn birch chairs. If then there be a sympathetic chord in your make-up, or with hearing ear and seeing eye you, have been sanctified in the secret places that lie beyond the beaten trails, you will all the more readily call up the echoes of their voices.

If your visit be in June, by the hushed radiance of the midnight sun some of the old-timers—but not the oldest—will take you up the mossy trail that leads to the starting-point on the Long Trail where, surrounded by birch trees whose slender pillars glow pink and even scarlet in the rays of the halted sun, and cast their shadows on the murmuring river beneath, sleep a commandery of the men, the mere mention of whose names recall lonely camp-fires, pitifully unavailing life-gleams in the arctic wilderness; of a myriad blazed trails, some of them reclaimed by the spirit of the North, others now commercial highways; of rude crosses on the banks of unnamed streams or mayhap on the brow of a commanding mountain, and momentarily be stirred by the force that, from time immemorial has animated all pioneers, no matter in

Digitized by Google

what channel of human usefulness their efforts have been expended.

Thirty long Winters ago the Sourdough Twins, on the high tide of adventurous careers—for they had panned on many streams in many lands—blazed a trail across the Dyea Pass and down to the headwaters of the Yukon, then a land unknown. In succession they rocked on the Big Salmon, the Sixty-Mile, the Stewart, the Forty-Mile and many other streams which, previous to their advent, were nameless; and ten years later, even then old men, they had come to anchor on the Argonaut claim on Birch Creek in the Circle district.

On the occasion of their first clean-up on the ground Sam had turned and gazed at the sloping hills then, as now, ablaze in the chameleon tunic of Autumn, and remarked:

"It couldn't have been better, Pete. We've got pay at both ends of the claim which assures us that the pay-streak is continuous, and I guess they'll be pay in it when we've toddled along. We're mighty lucky."

To which Pete, unblessed by the poetic vision of Sam though endowed with other qualities aplenty, replied:

"Yuh, it's a good claim, and the timber on the hillsides just the right size for our business; dry too, which will save us a lot of work and worry."

And Sourdough Sam had smiled his large tolerant smile.

The latter had been mistaken in his estimation, not as regards the pay-streak of the Argonaut, but as to their own longevity; for during the past two Summers they had been resluicing the tailing piles from the dirt taken out in the early years when their tools were of the most primitive order. And as they had not saved during the fat years—their gold sacks had never been tied—they were ill-prepared to combat the penury of the lean. The past Summer had been the most disastrous in their career; floods in the Spring, drouth in the Summer and floods again in the Fall.

Because of this they had barely kept ahead of their account at the store down at the forks—though Cal Franklin its proprietor would unhesitatingly have placed the keys of the place in their hands and felt favored by their acceptance—but he knew the Twins too well even to suggest credit. Also, under ideal conditions they could not have cleaned up better than a scant Winter outfit, for although they worked at capacity whenever they could, one husky miner could have run more dirt through the boxes in one day than the two of them could size up to in a week.

So it was in silence they regarded the little heap of gold dust in the bottom of the last sluice-box in the string, each clinging to his side of the box, for with constant shoveling their figures were very bent. They felt they were looking upon their last clean-up, for they had lived so long together that their thoughts ran in the same channel.

"About as usual, Pete," finally observed Sourdough Sam.

"The prettiest gold I ever saw," extravagantly declared Sourdough Pete in rejoinder.

Coincident with which sentiment he removed his tattered hat and rubbed his bald head.

A whimsical smile crossed the patriarchal face of Sourdough Sam.

"I'd sooner have it as ugly as sin, Pete, and a little more of it. But we ain't got any kick comin'. We're old enough to be dead anyhow."

"No, I kain't say's we've got any howl to make, Sam. We've played the game fa'r and squar', fa'r and squar'. Jes' the same, I wish to remark that thar ain't a dead bone in my body—yit; though I reckon it wouldn't take much of a stampede to clean up the pay-marrow that's left in either our rickle o' bones."

Sourdough Sam wasn't listening, so Pete picked up a little scoop and with a worn whisk-broom brushed the gold into it, and followed by Tom, one of two husky dogs, he took his way to the cabin on the hillside. Sourdough Sam started to pile up the boxes.

Sourdough Pete dried the gold on top of the old stove, blew the dust out of it and weighed it. As he laboriously cast up the amount in dollars he once more rubbed his bald head.

"Jes' about seventy dollars," he muttered. "Enough to buy rough grub for one man for the Winter—*ef* the grouse and rabbits are tame. An' to think we slaved a month for that!"

Leaving the gold in the scales he started to prepare supper. It was a simple meal: a fried rabbit and some warmed-over beans. When it was ready he went to the door and called to Sam who, with his head on his breast was seated on the pile of boxes. He

Digitized by Google

came at the call and was followed by Jerry, brother of Tom.

During the meal they recalled many incidents of bygone days, but studiously avoided reference to the problem that, like a rat in a cage, beat against the walls of their minds.

After washing the dishes a soiled deck of cards was produced and they played a few games of cribbage. But any game of skill soon palls when you know that your partner is deliberately playing into your hand. Presently the end of the candle, which had been stuck in a hole in the top of an empty milk can, fell inside and left them in darkness. They found their way to bed without any trouble, but not to sleep.

During the night about four inches of snow fell and heaped up the blight caused by the late frosty weather.

Next morning they piled their tools, robes and cooking utensils on the sled, hitched up Tom and Jerry thereto and started for Circle City, distant thirty miles. At the forks they settled up their account with Cal Franklin, accepted a cigar and resumed their way.

About noon a band of men with their blankets on their backs overtook them. Some of them laughed derisively at the queer cavalcade. Sourdough Sam with a rope around his neck and a hand on the geepole trotted beside Jerry, the lead dog, while Pete, with the aid of a long pole, pushed from behind. The traveling was hard. Those men were aliens who were working for a big hydraulic outfit up on Frying-pan Creek; birds of passage, job-hunters who were hurrying back to Circle to catch a boat for the Outside. In the words of Sam they "didn't belong."

UPON their arrival in Circle that night the Sourdough Twins paused at the cabin of Pop Gibson, the only other remaining member of the original band who had stampeded from Forty-Mile to the local diggings twenty years before. With fearful eyes they read the marshal's notice tacked upon the door. They were thus engaged when McDermot himself hove in sight, and while Pete questioned him in regard to Pop's absence Sam gazed at the pioneer's resting-place on the hill.

"Shipped him out to the Miners' Home at Sitka in July," McDermot replied. "Have you had a good clean-up this season?"

"Great," stated Sourdough Sam solemnly.

"Sure; oh, sure!" averred Pete.

McDermot gazed from the one to the other.

"Glad to hear it, boys."

And he passed on, a skeptical look upon his face.

After a swift glance at each other the Sourdough Twins passed on to their own shack.

Though dead tired and hungry neither had any appetite for supper; so after feeding Tom and Jerry they turned in.

Along toward midnight Sourdough Pete sat up in his bunk.

"Sam," he queried, "what kind of a place is the Miners' Home?"

Sourdough Sam gave a fine exhibition of a man walking from a deep sleep.

"It's a place,"—he yawned—"where you get pie for breakfast, pie for dinner and more pie for supper."

For a full minute Sourdough Sam could not separate his thoughts from the crunching ice in the river a few rods away, and the ears of Sourdough Pete were dinned by the roysterers in the Arctic saloon, a full hundred yards to the north.

"I see," the latter at length remarked. "Gosh, I'm fond o' pie too—but not that sort," he concluded in a whisper. "Good-night, Sam."

"Good-night, Pete."

But still the thoughts of Sourdough Sam followed the ice in the Yukon, and those of Pete persisted in haunting the bar of the Arctic saloon.

While Pete was sawing wood for the stove on the following morning, Sam started to write out a list of goods, keeping to the old prices and within the sixty-five dollars, the remainder of their cleanup after settling up with Cal Franklin.

After three hours of effort Sam pushed back his chair from the table and rose. "It was bad enough last Fall when we only had two hundred and fifty dollars for our outfit, but——"

He put on his hat and coat and passed out. Pete stopped sawing.

"I'm going down for the outfit," observed Sam.

"Sure, sure. Think you'll need a hand, Sam?"

Then in order to hide his embarrassment he clapped a mittened hand to his nose and gave it a vigorous blow.

Digitized by Google

Sam hitched up Jerry to the sled before venturing a reply.

"I guess not, Pete."

He hitched up Tom.

"No, I think not. Haw there, Jerry," and he started for the Company store.

The gaze of Sourdough Pete followed the bent figure of his partner.

"Gosh," he muttered, passing the back of his mitt across his eyes, "ef Sam ain't turned an old, old man all to once! Pete, you old good-for-nothin', why don't you think up sumpin'?"

And again he started to saw wood, but slower this time.

"At a pinch," Sam was saying to himself, "there ought to be enough to keep body and soul together in one man for five or six months—flour, rice, beans and so forth."

He gazed at the glare ice that had formed along the shore, against which the float ice was grinding.

"I'm about due to have a real smart thought," he concluded, a smile lighting up his face.

On entering the store he faced a new man behind the counter and in answer to his query he was informed that Bradshaw had been promoted to Fairbanks. Sam shoved his list over the counter. The other picked it up, ran his eye over it, and allowed a sneer of amusement to distort his face for a moment. He had left Frisco but three months before.

"Your prices are 'way off, old man," he presently remarked. "Everything has gone up. The war, you know. Of course if you've got the money——"

Sam held out a trembling hand for the list. "Just tell me the difference in the prices of things and I'll make the changes accordingly," he said, his heart sinking.

The list was revised and Sam carried the goods out to the sled and started home.

"Prices have gone up, Pete," he remarked on his arrival there. "Some war or another the new manager says. Just the same, I took a plunge and bought two plugs of tobacco."

"Fine," replied Pete, "fine. Ain't war ——, though? Gimme one o' the plugs, Sam."

Barring an occasional cigar from Cal Franklin neither had had a smoke all Summer, and both loved their pipes.

During the next few days the Sourdough Twins slashed, sawed and chopped enough wood to last them nearly all Winter. That job done they routed out all the old socks, moccasins and mitts and mended them. For the most part they did this in silence. Indeed for no tangible reason they began to grow constrained and self-conscious in each other's presence.

The last boat of the season, Dawson to St. Michael, plowed her way through the ice to the wharf. She was like a phantom ship, being covered with glare ice over all.

Sourdough Pete sneaked up to Charlie McDermot the marshal who stood at the end of the gangplank.

"Say, Charlie," he whispered, "d'ye think you could send me out to that thar Miners' Home on the *Sarah*? Y'e see"—he gulped—"that is, Sam and me, we ain't gettin' along, an'——"

Charlie turned and looked at him.

"I dunno, Pete," he replied slowly. "But if you'd care to find out we'll go up to the commissioner and see about it. We ain't got much time. Want to go?"

"Sure," replied Pete bravely.

McDermot placed his arm through that of the old man and led him to the Government office, in this instance a log cabin.

On entering, a swift look passed between the marshal and the commissioner.

"Pete wants to go out to the Miners' Home, Billy," announced the former with a sly wink and a meaning look.

"Uh-huh," commented the commissioner. "Ain't been Outside for quite a while, have you, Pete?"

"No, I ain't never been Outside since Sam and I came in thirty years ago," Pete made answer, his shoulders shrinking ever so little.

The commissioner pushed a printed form over to him.

"Just read that over before signing it, Pete."

Pete removed his almost furless cap and laid it on the desk, rubbed his bald spot and began to read. Another meaning glance passed between the marshal and the commissioner.

As he read, a slow flush mounted the old man's face, even to the fringes of white hair at the back of his head. The matter of the paper was to the effect that the applicant was destitute, unable to support himself, in effect did not possess, free and clear, the sum of twenty dollars.

Digitized by Google

Pete laid the paper on the desk with a trembling hand.

"I guess—I guess I'll wait until next Fall," he stammered.

And without another word he seized his hat and made for the door. On reaching the open air he breathed deeply.

"A pauper," he whispered. "Not with me!"

Once more the marshal and the agent looked meaningly at each other. The former put his hand into his pocket and produced his poke.

"I beat you to it," the commissioner cried, planking a twenty-dollar gold piece on the desk.

McDermot laid its twin beside it.

"I guess I can rustle up a couple of hundred before night," the latter remarked. "We'll have to go about it mighty careful. My, what pride! For a fact I know they've been half starved for two years. I'll get the outfit ready, then, some night we'll get both of them out of their cabin long enough to slip it in on them. They'll never know who did it."

With a long parting Who-o-o! the *Sarah* sloughed her frozen nose once more into the stream and resumed her race against the ice to the mouth of the Yukon. Circle City was cut off from the Outside for the next eight months.

Sourdough Pete watched her scarcely without breathing until she turned the bend in the river.

"Gosh, I'm glad she's gone," he sighed. "I wonder where Sam and I will be when next she sloughs into the wharf?"

His head on his breast he returned to the cabin.

IT SNOWED all next day and the Twins stayed indoors and pretended to play crib. Despite their enthusiastic remarks when one of them took a game neither enjoyed it. During that night the snow ceased and the thermometer went down for the first cold spell of the season. The Yukon was running full of floe ice and at a pace less than a mile an hour.

That afternoon Dave Lowry the Circle-Fork Yukon mail-carrier staggered into their cabin. Under his arm he carried a large and evidently heavy package which he laid on the table before sitting down. The Sourdough Twins welcomed Dave effusively but eyed his package with ill-concealed disapproval.

Dave, taking notice of this shifted uneasily on his stool.

"I guess we're in for a cold spell," he observed self-consciously.

"It's due," replied Sam, his eye on the package.

"Kain't expect anything else," declared Pete between puffs, an eye on the package.

Dave coughed deprecatingly.

"Terrible war this, ain't it?"

"All wars are terrible," opined Sam.

"Every oncet in a while they's got to be a war," offered Pete, "until the nations adopt the habit of taking a few good swigs of spruce tea every Spring. That's the stuff to drive the distemper out o' them!"

The discussion regarding the qualities of spruce tea as an elixir lasted fifteen minutes, and died miserably. During its tenure Dave Lowry twice hitched his stool nearer to the door.

"McDermot tells me," Dave resumed after a painful silence, "that there's hundreds of men bein' killed over in Yurrup. He says too, they've got cannon that shoots all of ten miles."

The Twins laughed incredulously.

"How could they see what they was shootin' at?" jeered Sam.

During the diversion Dave hitched his stool a few inches nearer still to the door.

"McDermot says they've got air machines that guide them," Dave offered.

The Twins gazed at each other and smiled.

"Oh, I don't believe it any more'n you do."

Dave yawned elaborately, rose to his feet seized the door latch and passed out.

"So long," he cried over his shoulder.

The heads of the Twins came together and four gnarled hands seized the package.

"Don't forget your package," cried Sam. He swung it under his arm and darted out the door after Dave.

Dave was half-way to the Arctic saloon when Sam, panting from exertion, caught up with him.

"You forgot your package, Dave," he wheezed, looking the mail-carrier squarely in the eye.

"Gosh, so I did!" cried Dave in a surprised tone, once more tucking it under his arm. "Care to come down and have a drink, Sam?"

Digitized by Google

"No, I guess not, Dave," replied Sam. "Thanks of course. I ran out without my coat, so I'll——"

He turned and hurried back to the cabin.

Dave Lowry mournfully entered the Arctic saloon, laid the package on the bar and handed McDermot two gold twenties and a ten. "You win," he said.

McDermot laughed.

"I'll take twenty of it, Dave," he said, "as a contribution toward an outfit for the Twins."

And he outlined the scheme evolved by the commissioner and himself to outwit the proud old partners, and within fifteen minutes he had received two hundred dollars in aid of its fulfilment.

Dave Lowry thereupon opened his package; handed the two quarts of whisky back to Curly the bartender, opened the box of cigars and distributed them among the boys and shoved the carton of tobacco into a sack and laid it away.

Sourdough Sam reentered the cabin with a worried look on his face.

"I wonder how Dave Lowry could have known?" he remarked.

Pete, correctly divining McDermot as the informer, flushed a deep crimson.

"I guess—I guess it must 'a' been me, Sam," he offered in a tone of contrition.

Sourdough Sam wheeled.

"You!"

There was a world of unbelief in his voice.

"I—I didn't mean to, you know, Sam," qualified Pete.

Sam turned his back upon his partner to hide the trembling smile that like a dawn crept into his face.

"I just happened to let drop a word to McDermot one day—not meanin' to, you'll understand——"

His voice died away in a note of sorrow.

Sam turned and faced him.

"Pete, we've been partners for fifty years," he began in a tone of rebuke, "and I never thought I'd live to see the day that you—that you——"

Pete jumped to his feet and seized his cap.

"I know what you mean, Sam, and I want you to know that I feel like a skunk. But I'll do my best to make good."

He opened the door and passed out.

Sam ran to the window and followed the tall bent figure with his eye until it disappeared into the Arctic saloon.

"I felt it comin'," he muttered to himself as he turned and stepped to the center of the cabin floor. But a moment he stood thus, and in the next he was electrified into activity. Into his warsack he crammed his robe and a few well-worn pieces of wearing apparel. Into another sack a lot of worthless cooking utensils. These he packed out and placed upon the sled at the door. Then he opened the cache and took out an old shovel and pick, a pan and a few other tools long since discarded. These also he piled upon the sled.

Then he reentered the cabin and approached the corner where the grub was kept. Into an empty rolled-oats sack he poured a cupful of rice, tied a knot in it and poured in a cupful of beans, another knot then a cupful of flour, tying the top of it with a piece of string. Then he carefully scattered a few grains of rice upon the floor, a few beans and a little flour; took from the wall his rifle and snow-shoes which, with the little sack of food, he carried out and placed on the sled along with the rest of his outfit, and made everything fast.

Then he harnessed Jerry the dog and hitched him to the sled; returned to the cabin and put on his parka and tied a faded red sash about his waist; donned his mitts and fur cap and, after a last look around the cabin blew out the candle and passed out. A minute later he was steering Jerry down the little trail cut in the bank to the river below, the crunching of the still-moving ice dinning his ears.

On passing the point opposite the Arctic saloon there floated out to him the trill of a piano and the quavery voice of Sourdough Pete raised in "The Old Oaken Bucket." He paused until the song ended and the applause died away.

"Gosh," he muttered wonderingly, "for all his years Pete hasn't forgot how to make a piano talk. Well, he's havin' a good time. I'd like to have a drink with him for auld lang syne, but that would spoil everything. Haw there, Jerry," and they passed into the vapor that rose from the river.

After driving a sliver half a mile long into the silence, Sourdough Sam swung the sled around at right angles to the river. But he did not pause. Jerry whined and hung back on his traces. Sam urged him forward by patting the scarred old head. The crunch of the moving floes against the solid shore-ice became deafening. The Spirit of the Yukon called, and Sourdough Sam answered it.

Digitized by Google

IN THE Arctic saloon the evening passed quickly. One after another the men went home to their cabins or slept where they sat. Sourdough Pete played "Auld Lang Syne" and in a crooning, quavering voice sang it through to the last word. Then he rose and walked up to the bar. Only he and Curly were left of the joyous crowd. The latter placed a bottle and glasses on the bar between them.

"Drink," said Curly. "You're there with the goods, Pete."

Sourdough Pete pushed his glass aside.

"Gimme one o' them thar long-stemmed fella's, Curly," he asked, pointing a wavering forefinger at a row of wine glasses.

Curly complied with a smile. Sourdough Pete could have the house for the asking.

The old Sourdough filled the glass to the brim.

"D'ye know, Curly, that Old Sam and I have been partners for fifty years? Yes, sir!"

He leaned over the bar and lowered his voice.

"Pretty hard sleddin' now for the old fellow, though. Time is gettin' the best o' Sam. Of course, as a man, you'll understand, Curly, I ain't never been fit to grease his mukluks. Just the same"—he stood up straight threw back his head and into his face crept an expression that awed Curly—"we've been partners for fifty years. Here's to Friendship, man's noblest attribute."

Sourdough Pete raised the glass to his lips and drained it; then, snapping the glass stem he threw the pieces into the cuspidor.

"You're all right, Pete," cried Curly.

Sourdough Pete moved toward the door.

"See that you go straight home now, Pete. The river stopped an hour ago; it's thirty-five below zero, and you know what that means when you've got a few drinks under your belt."

Sourdough Pete paused with his hand on the latch and nodded his wise old head.

"I know; I know. Good-night, Curly."

He opened the door and passed out singing:

Oh, the days of old
Were the days of gold,
In the days of forty-nine.

A nose was stuck into his mitt. Pete looked down and into Tom's face. The faithful old dog had lain at the door since he entered.

"Darn me ef I hadn't forgot all about you," he said, patting the scarred head affectionately. "Run along home, boy."

He waved a hand in the direction of the cabin. Tom *wow-o-wed* understandingly, but made no move.

"Well"—Pete took off his cap and rubbed his head—"I don't know that it'll make any difference. Come along, old socks."

Instead of going to his own cabin he left the river front at the first turn and traveled west through the cluster of cabins until he reached the outskirts of the camp beyond. It was unrelentingly cold, and he shivered convulsively as the liquor and the frost became merged.

Leaving the trail he waded through deep snow until he came to an old cabin, doorless and windowless. This he entered, took off his short fur coat and, after making a pillow of it, he placed it at the head of the old bunk, the poles of which were still in the bottom, climbed in and stretched himself. Tom raised himself on his hind legs and placed his forepaws on the edge of the bunk and whimpered piteously. Sourdough Pete reached forth a groping hand and patted his head.

"Good ol' dog—good frien'." Owing to the chattering of his teeth he had great difficulty in articulating. "G' by, Sam. Plenty of grub for you this Winter anyhow, an' the medicine ain't at all bad to take."

There was silence for about a minute, then he made feeble motions with his hands as if paddling in a canoe.

"Looks like a —— good country we're goin' to, Sam," he cried joyously. "I bet thar's pay, thar."

Tom shook with fear and whined lonesomely. Receiving no response he sprang into the bunk and stretched himself at his master's side.

Digitized by Google

THE WISE MAN

by Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "The Molly Man," "Into the Hills," etc.

IT IS the oldest story in the world. Its scenes, the real gist of them, could be laid anywhere: in Babylon or in Alexandria, in Constantinople or in Paris, in Buenos Aires or in New York, or in any other place, city or country, on the face of the earth. It is being lived constantly before your eyes and mine; it has been lived constantly since time began, and it will continue to be lived constantly until time ends.

And the pity and tragedy of it all is that those who live it do not find the truth until they find it as Mad Blackburn found it. Mad Blackburn found it written on the iron door.

The old Don Pascual de Lavalle, the very richest man in Sonora, seeing that the revolutionists were likely to attempt to press his great wealth into the service of that which they religiously termed the Cause, was making preparations for a return to his mother country. He couldn't take with him his houses and his silver mines and his cattle on a thousand hills, of course. Neither could he safely take with him the gold his possessions would bring. Any wealth he took with him to Spain he would have to carry in his hands, and one may not carry a million dollars in gold in his hands.

There were no banks that he would trust, now that all Mexico was feeling the revolution; Don Pascual was an exceedingly wise man, as wise men go. Therefore, after much deliberation, Don Pascual converted his wealth into jewels, diamonds and pearls and rubies, thinking that he could sell them at a profit in Barcelona and become even richer. And so quiet and secretive was he about these transactions that only one person other than the members of his immediate family knew.

That one person was an American named Madison Blackburn, a huge, sunburned, smooth-faced man with yellowish hair and quick blue eyes, who romantically thought of himself as a soldier of fortune. One of the big revolutionists had sent him to Hermosillo with orders to spy upon Don Pascual de Lavalle; and he had not been long in deciding that he needed the wealth of the old Spaniard far more than the Cause needed it, so he was planning to get it for himself.

Now this Mad Blackburn was not such a bad man. He was human, even as you and I are human. A million dollars in diamonds and pearls and rubies tempted him sorely, Just as it would have tempted you and me after we had been fairly hypnotized by the shining jewels themselves. He had seen them twice from his perch in a tree that stood near to a high window in the rich man's great house.

It was a little after nightfall. The air was filled with the mingled odors of flowers and burning cigarets, the laughter and the songs of youths and maidens, the low thrumming of the inevitable guitars.

Mad Blackburn sat in his room with an open letter in his hands. The letter was from the revolutionist commander-in-chief,

Digitized by Google

who was impatient to know what Blackburn had found out concerning the movements of Pascual de Lavalle, and who added, as though in an afterthought, that Blackburn was to report at headquarters immediately.

Blackburn read it twice, then frowned up at the low-browed half-Yaqui messenger who, clad in the soiled remnants of a uniform, stood awaiting his pleasure a few feet across the floor.

"Who wrote this?" he said in his slow Spanish.

The half-Yaqui quailed. All half-Yaquis quailed when Mad Blackburn looked at them with his quick blue eyes.

"*El comandante grande, señor,*" came very readily.

The big American rose, gripped the thin shoulders of the messenger hard and turned him so that all the swarthy face was in the light of the candle. The fellow was not lying, and Blackburn knew it.

"You may go, Cyrilo," said Blackburn.

"But I was to return with you," Cyrilo replied.

The American frowned again.

"Then wait here until I come back," he ordered.

He put on his wide-rimmed cowman's hat, saw that his cartridge-belt and the cylinder of his big revolver were filled with cartridges, and went out into the soft night. The time had come to take the old don's jewels and make a dash for the border.

THE grounds about the great house were dark and still when he entered them. He went rapidly toward the tree and the high window, moving as silently and as stealthily as a cloud in the night. Without a sound he climbed the tree and peered through the window, which was open.

In the center of the finely furnished room Don Pascual sat with a newspaper in his hands; he was reading by the light of a chandelier that hung directly over his head. Then Blackburn leaned in at the window and leveled his revolver at Don Pascual.

"Don't make any noise," Blackburn warned.

The rich man dropped his paper to his knees and shrugged his shoulders in the manner in which Spaniards are forever shrugging their shoulders. His lips worked, then tightened to a straight, bloodless line.

Blackburn climbed over the sill and dropped lightly to the floor. A glance round the room showed him that the doors were all closed. Still keeping Don Pascual at the point of his revolver, he went to the doors and locked them.

"Now open the safe," he commanded.

"But, señor—" protested the don.

"Open the safe!" repeated Mad Blackburn.

The rich man rose and went to a safe that stood in a corner of the room. With fingers that trembled violently, he began to fumble with the combination, and a moment later he reluctantly swung the heavy door open.

"Take out the iron box," ordered Blackburn.

"The iron box!" muttered the Spaniard. "What iron box?"

"Quick!" snapped Blackburn, jabbing his revolver toward the don. "Quick!"

Old Pascual de Lavalle shrugged his shoulders again. From the safe he took a strong wrought-iron box about fifteen inches long, which was strong-hinged, double-riveted and double-locked.

"Put it on the table, and give me the key," said Blackburn.

Don Pascual seemed pitifully helpless. He put the box on a near-by table, then he took from his pocket a brass key and dropped it into Blackburn's outstretched left hand. The passing of another minute saw Don Pascual bound as securely as ever any sea pirate's victim was bound, and a curtain was wound about his head to prevent his making an outcry. Blackburn took up the iron box and climbed out at the high window.

He had scarcely reached the street when the Spaniard freed his head from the curtain's smothering folds and gave a shrill, nervous shriek for help. Servants battered down a door and entered. They found their master chittering like an idiot, and in his chittering they caught the two words "Big American."

Soon the whole city rang with the big American's name. In spite of himself, Madison Blackburn was very well known there in Hermosillo.

It was not long until the pursuers became a howling, unreasoning mob, which cried out hotly for the blood of the pursued. Don Pascual de Lavalle was well loved, for all his riches; he had been a charitable man, which was but a part of his everlasting wisdom. Blackburn, his fleetness of foot and

Digitized by Google

his great powers of endurance notwithstanding, found himself hard pressed. The iron box under his left arm had become heavy.

Thinking to evade those who followed him, he turned into an alley; but he had not gone a hundred feet when he found that it was a blind alley! It was too late to retreat. He turned to a door; it was fastened; he put his shoulder to it and broke its fastenings, and a moment later he found himself in the lobby of a small hotel that catered chiefly to foreigners. A voice that was like music fell upon his ears:

"I say, friend, that's a nice, quiet way to come in!" laughingly.

Among those who confronted him were three Americans, all of whom were strong and rawboned and sunburned almost to the brown of weathered copper; they were soldiers of fortune, like himself, But he brushed them aside when they approached him, and ran to the front entrance.

In the street before the Hotel Leon de Cro a seething throng was crying out his name. It was a time of extremity, and almost did Mad Blackburn lose his head. If he fought alone, he would perish, he knew. He turned back to the three Americans, and hastily drew them aside.

"I've got jewels in this box," he whispered, panting—"a million dollars in jewels —help me get away with them, and we're equal dividers——"

"We're to you!" cut in the man who had hailed him a minute before. "Out with you—they're coming in the back way!"

The four broke for the street. There was the keen thunder of a rifle-shot, and a bullet shattered a glass beside the doorway as they passed out. Mad Blackburn himself answered the shot. Each of the other three fired once into the air. None of them could ever tell correctly what happened next. They drove themselves, shooting as they went, into the yelling, cursing sea of humanity that blocked the way. Time after time the mob swallowed them up; but always they freed themselves by demoniacal fighting, and surged on.

When they had reached the other side of the street, they faced about and fired again; then they dashed through a store and soon gained another street. There they halted an automobile and sprang into it, and forced the driver to run northward at high speed.

An hour afterward the car came abruptly to a halt. Something had gone wrong with its engine. There was no time to waste in making repairs, for the whole of Soñora would soon know of the robbery and be watching every road.

The four Americans left the automobile and hurried to a near-by ranch-house, where they forced the ranchman to saddle and bridle four horses for them. All that night they road toward the border at Sasabe, and when daybreak came they were eighty miles from Hermosillo.

TEN days later, at sundown, the four men sat in camp on the bank of a very small and brackish-tasting stream of water that ran through the edge of a desert country—a country of hot and shifting sands, gray boulders, cacti and catclaw, scrubby mesquit and spanishdagger, rattlesnakes, horned toads and gila monsters.

It was the first time they had dared to feel at ease during the entire ten days; those had been days of hard riding and hard fighting, days of endless tricks and strategies in order that they might keep themselves and the precious iron box out of the hands of the Mexicans; they were weary, lank, hungry and sore.

Over a little fire of greasewood sticks, Mad Blackburn was broiling stolen bacon and boiling stolen coffee. His companions, Hale, Weaver and Cooke, three men who were as much alike as the fingers of your hands, sat impatiently watching him. The hardships of the ten days had gone worse with them than with Blackburn. They were strong men, but they were not so strong as Blackburn.

"I suggest that we make the divvy after we eat," suddenly said Hale.

"So do I," said both Weaver and Cooke.

"The majority rules," grunted Blackburn. "I wish we had some feed for the horses. They're about petered."

Madison Blackburn had really intended that the jewels should be fairly divided when he had promised it back in the lobby of the Hotel Leon de Oro. Now, however, he had other intentions. The lure of a million dollars had throttled and strangled to death most of the good that was in him, just as it has throttled and strangled to death most of the good in many a better man before him.

Digitized by Google

Mad Blackburn meant to throw off his companions, and himself enjoy the golden fruits. He had expected that they would want to make a division as soon as they could call themselves safe for an hour, and he had fully prepared himself for that emergency: the key that Don Pascual had given him he had very cunningly hidden in his shoe.

When the meal was ready, the man who had prepared it held the others off while he took from his pocket a small flask filled with whisky.

"I saved it for this occasion," he said with a smile. "Drink to the health of Don Pascual de Lavalle."

Hale held the flask at arm's length.

"Here," he laughed, "is to the health of Don Pascual, the wise man!"

Then he drank.

The other three took it in turn; and before he drank, each repeated laughingly after Hale:

"Here is to the health of Don Pascual, the wise man!"

They fell to, and they ate as starving men eat. They ate the burnt bacon and drank the raw coffee as though they were dining upon the ambrosia and the nectar of the gods. When they had finished, Hale wiped his fingers on a wide blue bandana and knelt in the sand before their treasure-chest.

"Do you mind if I open it?" he asked Blackburn. "If you don't mind, Mad, let's have the key."

"I don't mind, of course. What's the difference who opens it?"

Blackburn was feeling in his trousers-pockets.

"Now what did I do with that key?" Let's see, I put it—where the devil did I put it?"

One pocket after another he turned out, while a frown, seemingly of chagrin, gathered on his sunburned countenance.

"Well, it's gone," he growled, and his quick blue eyes were strikingly innocent. "I've lost the key, Hale. Search me, Hale; I'm not trying to give you a bad deal, and I want you to be sure of it."

Hale was completely deceived. He rose. "I'll take your word for it, Mad," he said a little disappointedly.

"No," objected Blackburn, "you won't take my word for it. Or if you did, the others might not. Search me; search my clothing, my hat, everything."

This speech finished disarming Weaver and Cooke of their suspicions. No searching was done.

"We might shoot the box open," suggested Hale.

Blackburn rose to the occasion.

"Sure, we can do that," he agreed.

He went to his knees in the sand before the iron box. With his right hand he drew his big revolver and put its muzzle to one of the two keyholes. But he did not pull the trigger. After a moment of silence and apparent thoughtfulness, he put the revolver back in its holster, rose slowly, and looked gravely toward Hale.

"To shoot it open would mean to ruin several thousand dollars' worth of jewels," he declared soberly. "Besides, it might take a good many cartridges, and we're short on cartridges. Let's keep it as it is for a while. As it is, it 'll serve to keep us together, and we're stronger when we're together. We haven't exactly got away wth it yet, you know."

The others agreed with visible reluctance. The fever was upon them, the lure of a million was upon them. And Blackburn knew it.

Night fell softly, and the four men lay on the sand with their tousled heads pillowed on their saddles; and under Mad Blackburn's saddle was the precious box. Two hours passed, hours that, except for the occasional faraway yapping of a coyote, were as heavy as lead with the tomblike silence of the desert land. The chief of the four had not slept because, for one thing, none of his companions had slept; their deep and regular breathing had not deceived him.

They were weary and in need of sleep, even as he was weary and in need of sleep, he knew; and he knew what kept them awake. Then Blackburn himself pretended to be sleeping, and he pretended well. Ten minutes later he felt a careful tugging at the iron box; he stirred slightly, and the tugging ceased. Not long after that he felt a tugging at the box from the other side; again he stirred slightly, and again the tugging ceased.

Five more minutes, and he felt a hand touch the butt of his revolver; he caught the hand, but quickly freed it, as though he were not thoroughly awake. The hand, he knew by a big lion's-head ring on its third finger, was Hale's. So they were all after the treasure, and singly! Well, it was every

Digitized by Google

man for himself now—and the devil for all, perhaps. Hale was the one most to be feared, for Hale was the most careful; Hale had meant to take his revolver first, which was very sensible.

Two more hours went by. Hale, Weaver and Cooke had fallen asleep because of the long weariness. Blackburn's powers of endurance, as well as his strength and his cunning, were greater by far. When Blackburn knew beyond doubt that his companions were sleeping soundly, he rose, gathered up his saddle and that which was under it, and stole toward the four indistinct shapes that were their four half-dead horses.

He threw on his saddle and made fast its cinches, cut the ropes that tethered the other three horses and ran them away, mounted with the iron box under his left arm and rode up the little stream for a hundred yards; then he crossed the stream and rode northward as rapidly as his tired horse could carry him.

"Follow me, if you can," he growled, looking backward. "Follow me without horses, if you can, d——n your souls."

He felt the need of a stimulant. There was a little whisky left in his flask, and he drank it. But first he lifted the flask and said in the grimmest mockery,

"Here is to the health of Don Pascual, the wise man!"

Blackburn believed that he was going toward Nogales on the border, where he meant to sneak aboard a night train for the east. He knew that his mount would soon go down, but he believed that he could easily walk on to Nogales. He pushed the weakened animal on relentlessly, frequently applying a greasewood switch to the thin flanks.

WHEN daybreak came, it showed him a country that was entirely strange to him—and he thought that he knew Sonora from head to tail. Far to his left lay a rocky and barren range of little hills that he had never seen before, and everywhere else there was nothing but a sandy, stony waste. Perhaps, he muttered to himself, he was not in Sonora: perhaps he was in Arizona; but surely, he had not allowed himself to become so badly tangled as that!

However, he pressed on determinedly until, in the middle of the afternoon, when the red-hot sun's light was like the blast from an iron furnace, his horse gave forth a piteous, gurgling groan from deep in its throat and pitched forward and downward, dead when its body struck the burning sands.

Then it was that Mad Blackburn realized that he was lost in the heart of a desert, without a horse, without food save for a half a pound of raw salt-bacon, and without water. It appalled him, for he knew better than most men the desert's merciless way with mankind. His sunburned face grew pale for a moment, and his quick blue eyes filled with a light that was tragic and terrible. For the first time in his adventurous life, Madison Blackburn was really afraid.

But hope dies hard in men of his kind, if it dies at all. Mad Blackburn stood there beside the horse he had ridden to death and deliberated very calmly. His horse's hoof-prints were still dimly visible here and there all the way back along the forty desert miles that lay between him and the little stream of water. He knew that he had a bare, fighting chance if he turned back; he did not know that he had a bare, fighting chance if he went on.

So he gathered the iron box closer under his left arm and went toward the dim south, watching, always watching, for hoof-prints that the scorching winds had not filled with sand and now and then finding them. When night came down softly upon him, he dropped like a sick man, and went into the sleep of exhaustion gnawing at what there was left of his half a pound of raw salt-bacon. He awoke shortly after midnight with a burning thirst in his throat; the salty meat had made the thirst worse than it would have been otherwise.

He rose, his lips dry and his tongue inclined to stick to the roof of his mouth; if he could have found the hoof-prints in the darkness, he would have gone on. But there was no finding the hoofprints in the darkness, and he crumpled to the sand, hugged his treasure to him as though he feared that some spirit of that waterless land would take it from him, and he tried to sleep again. More by intense will power than by natural inclination, he did sleep again.

The next morning, he resumed his journey as soon as he was able to find the dim trail. He had, he figured, put behind him eight of the forty terrible miles; that left

Digitized by Google

thirty-two miles yet between him and the saving water. It had been a day and two nights, now, since he had had water, and he was growing weak; he began to shift the iron box from one arm to the other with short rests.

Blackburn was staggering a little when the blazing sun reached its zenith. Above him a vulture soared, and it reminded him of a small, black aeroplane. He sat down for a few minutes of rest. When he looked up again, the vulture was lower, and he drew his revolver and cursed it:

"Come a little nearer d—n you, and I'll kill you. You think you'll get to pick my bones, don't you? Well, d—n you, you won't! It'll be many a long day before you or any of your kind picks Madison Blackburn's bones."

But the vulture did not come nearer. The vulture knew—the vulture knew. In circles just out of pistol-shot, it continued to sail, like a small, black aeroplane.

Blackburn suddenly came possessed of a desire to see again the jewels for which he was paying such a dear price—for which he might have yet to pay that dearest of all prices, life itself. He found the key that he had forced Don Pascual de Lavalle to give him, and thrust it into one of the two keyholes.

It did not fit. He tried it in the other keyhole. It did not fit there, either. The old Spaniard had given him the wrong key!

"You were a wise man, Don Pascual!" sneered Mad Blackburn, and he laughed throatily.

He pushed the box out the length of his leg, leaned forward and put the muzzle of his revolver to one of the keyholes. What did it matter if he did spoil a few thousand dollars worth of jewels? There would be plenty left, for now he did not have to divide with anybody else. He pulled the trigger, the weapon roared, and one of the locks was shattered. Before the smoke had cleared away, there came the sound of a shot from some little distance ahead of him—and a bullet threw up a spurt of sand a yard out to his left.

He rose to his knees and looked over a hot, gray stone. Coming toward him slowly, deployed like skirmishers on a battle-line, he saw Hale and Weaver and Cooke, each with a revolver in his hand! Half mad with the lure of a million dollars, they had followed him into the heart of the desert. They had not seen him until after he had fired at the lock, because of the hot, gray stone that half hid him; they thought that he had fired at them.

Blackburn crept closer into the shelter of the stone, and leveled his revolver across it; he had a dead aim at Hale, for Hale was the one most to be feared.

"Stop," he cried, and they stopped, crouching like animals about to spring.

The next word that Blackburn uttered tore itself from his lips; it was a magic word, the eternal countersign of the desert—

"Water—" in a bleak, white voice.

"Water!" Hale growled thickly.

He too stood sorely in need of it.

"There's miles and miles of hell between us and water. I say, Mad, you double-crossed us, didn't you?"

"The pot calls the kettle black!" snarled the bigger man. "Each one of you tried to get away with it first—that last night there by the creek—and I beat you to it, you pickpockets! Put your guns down on the sand!"

Hale aimed quickly and fired. The bullet struck Blackburn's sheltering stone and ricocheted with a droning sound. Weaver and Cooke also fired, and one of the bullets struck the stone, flattened and dropped.

"So that's the issue, is it?" Mad Blackburn said thickly. "All right—then here goes——"

He fired quickly. He was a magnificent marksman. As a boy back in Tennessee's hills he had been able to shoot the gray squirrel's eye out with his father's long rifle. With the report of his revolver, Hale fell forward with his face in the hot sand. Again he fired, this time at Cooke; but the smoke of the first shot blinded him, and he missed. Cooke was running to the right now, and Weaver to the left; they were trying to get at all sides of the stone.

He aimed at Weaver, leading him by half a foot, and fired, and Weaver crumpled like a rag and fell. With a victorious oath, he began to shoot at the last of his assailants. When the smoke had cleared away, he saw Cooke lying supine, with his half-open eyes staring toward the blazing sun.

MAD BLACKBURN rose, holding to the stone to steady himself. He was the victor: he had won the fight against three. Then the thing took on another aspect. Victor? No. The grim

Digitized by Google

silences of the desert told him that he was not a victor, but a murderer. They told him that he was thrice a Cain. He dropped his heavy revolver and covered his face with his hands that he might not see.

But only for a moment. Love of life was calling to him to make haste toward the little stream of water that lay beyond miles and miles of blistering hell. He stooped and took up his treasure-box, and started. Half a dozen great blackbirds were sailing in circles over him now. They reminded him again of small, black aeroplanes.

All that afternoon he struggled on with a determination that was wonderful. The iron box was now like solid lead, but he clung to it as he clung to life; the one was useless now, without the other. Because of Hale and Weaver and Cooke, the night that followed was a night of horror.

When the century of blackness gave place to a new day, his tongue was swollen thick; his throat was filled with pain; his lips were parched, chafed open and bleeding.

About the middle of the morning, a laugh came to him, a laugh that he knew. He rubbed his eyes and looked around him. There stood Hale, Weaver and Cooke, the three men he had thought he had killed, smiling at him!

Mad Blackburn hugged the iron box closer to him.

"You shan't have it—it's mine—it's mine!" he chattered.

"We don't want it," said Hale, still smiling. "Wealth is one of the things least to be desired. This is a part of the truth that we found."

"What truth?" gurgled Blackburn.

"The truth that we found written on the iron door," Hale whispered reverently.

"The iron door!" repeated Mad Blackburn, and the pain in his throat was great. "What iron door?"

"Come," smiled Hale, "and we'll show you."

"Come," smiled Weaver and Cook, "and we'll show you."

"But I must go for water," muttered Blackburn. "Water—Oh, God—I'm dying for water! Hale, you may have—this million dollars—for one drop—" he choked, and went on— "Hale, I am like that man Dives, in Hell—give me water, Hale—Water, Hale!"

"This is the way to the iron door," said Hale. "Come, and we'll show you."

"Come," beckoned Weaver and Cooke, "and we'll show you."

They started eastward over the sands, and Blackburn, the iron box in his arms, staggered after them. He was surprised at the speed they made. They walked as men who never became tired.

Blackburn became more and more delirious. He babbled of cool springs of crystal-clear water under giant green beeches back in his native hills. He babbled of food, and then he thought of his mother—as a man well may, when he has come down to his last extremity—and he babbled of her... Why did the others go so fast? They were leaving him farther and farther behind.

"Wait," he gurgled again and again. "Wait, Hale."

But the three only beckoned to him they would not wait for him. Blackburn dragged himself on after them until sometime in the afternoon. Then he came to his senses for one brief moment. That which brought him to himself was the sight of Hale lying on his face in the sand, of Weaver lying crumpled like a rag, of Cooke lying supine with his half-open eyes staring fixedly upward, of a dozen vultures sailing in circles above.

He knew then, in that moment of clearness, that it had been the workings of his conscience, his own delirious imaginings, that had led him back to the iron door of death. All that he realized, and other things, before he fell.

TWO years afterward a prospector, riding a buckskin pony and leading a pair of pack-mules, crossed that desert. One morning he came upon four bleached-white skeletons, and the biggest one lay with its arms of bones around an iron box. There were two locks, and one of them had been shattered by a shot. The prospector shot the other. The box was filled with rags and nails.

Don Pascual had twice seen Mad Blackburn's face at the high window. Don Pascual was a wise man, as wise men go.

Digitized by Google

THE KING of CARADOS

A Complete Novelette

by Vance Palmer

CHAPTER I

THE MINE

IN THE little tin-and-weather-board office near the wharves, Brent hurriedly glanced over mail that had been laid ready for him, his keen, quick eyes searching for anything that was immediate and important, and his dust-begrimed forehead furrowed in three folds. His sombrero lay on the table in front of him and the rowels of his big silver spurs rattled as he paced about the room, for his temperament was such that he found it hard to keep still even while he read.

It was that reserve of irresistible energy that marked him out from all other people in Carados, where most men spent the heat of the day playing *monte* or *chusas* in the shade of a wall; or rather those of them who did not work for the Jardine Concession, which, body, beak, and bones, was Don Brent.

"What's this?" he said to the chief clerk who was hovering near by.

The latter looked up, all wrinkles and eyeglasses.

"Which do you mean?"

"The head-office letter, of course," said Brent. "They want us to show all sorts of hospitality to the Lightning Trust's agent when he comes down here. Now what the devil——"

The question was purely rhetorical and admitted no answer whatever. Neither was it Brent's usual habit to think aloud. Swasey, the chief clerk, showed his infusion of Latin blood by shrugging his shoulders.

"I don't know," he said. "It came a couple of days ago with the rest. I thought of sending it up to you with one of the mule-boys, but you told me to let all the mail wait till you came down."

Brent had stopped quite still and was looking through the square of window to where a bunch of *cargadores* were working about a squat-lighter that was moored to the wharf. In the vivid light of noon everything stood out in deadly clearness, the handful of lighters outlined against the stretch of yellow muddy water on the one hand and the serrated edge of the range cutting into the burnished sky on the other, with the huddle of white houses and *pulperias* lying between.

There was no movement in the dusty street that ran straight out from the water, but a few peons in their dirty white mantas sat talking in the shade of the cottonwood trees. While Brent's eyes gazed out unseeingly his brain, arrested in mid-flight like a struck bird, circled round the strange problem of why he should be asked to show hospitality to the Lightning Trust's agent, and the whole morning bristled with interrogations.

"Why should he be coming here at all?" he muttered, half to himself.

Digitized by Google

The chief clerk timidly vouchsafed his explanation.

"They've been spying out the land for some time, I guess," he said with a smile.

Brent turned round on his heel.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

In Swasey's shrug there was the suggestion that his chief had not talked over matters as fully as he might have done.

"Those two mining engineers who came here three months ago," he said, "they had Lightning Trust branded all over them. Yes, they sure had."

Brent did not say anything, for he had thought so himself at the time. Yet the matter had not sat very heavily on his mind. He knew very well that the Trust had for some time been trying to get hold of the Jardine Concession, though for what purpose he could not conceive, for silver was not one of their interests. And anyhow he could not believe that old Jardine would sell over his head.

It was not a matter of mere cash. Old Jardine back in his Wall Street office took nearly as much pride in the Concession as he did himself and he was too stubborn to let the Trust get its talons in his one ewe lamb.

"What time is the boat coming in?" he asked the chief clerk.

"It passed the Heads an hour ago," responded the latter. "That would bring it into the landing-stage about three."

Brent drove his hands deeply into his pockets.

"Well, you'll have to meet this guy," he said. "Show him round the place tonight and send him up to the mine with a mule-boy in the morning. I've got to get back."

The chief clerk nodded in assent, but Brent changed his mind before he had passed out through the door. Out of the cloudless blue sky the one query seemed to come buzzing down to sting him like a wasp in the face. It followed him across the plaza and into the small hotel where he ate his midday meal, and he could not drive it away from him by an effort of will. He was to show hospitality to the Lightning Trust's agent at the request of Jardine himself!

"It doesn't look good," he thought to himself. "No, it sure doesn't, no matter what side you dig into it from. But I can't believe that old Jardine——"

HE BROKE off abruptly, for the toot of a steamer in the harbor cut across his train of thought, and glancing out of the window he caught sight of the fortnightly boat edging in toward the landing-stage. It had arrived earlier than he expected.

The olive-skinned waiter standing by the door and drumming his fingers against the wood had been watching his face from the moment he entered, and a hint of uneasiness crept into his own, for he had seen in the big Americano's eyes suggestions of an anxiety and incertitude that should never have come near the King of Carados. For that was Brent's status indubitably; even the dirty little gamins in the street hailed him by the name as they stared up to see his nuggety sorrel gallop past.

It could never be comprehended either by them or by the waiter that Brent was merely the instrument of a small withered man, verging on seventy, who sat behind a roll-top desk somewhere in the Far North. Brent was the king; there was no other.

And perhaps they had the truth. It was not the little man behind the roll-top desk who had turned Carados from a sleepy little pueblo, where a handful of houses and dirty *pulperias* dozed beneath a circle of ragged cottonwood trees, into a thriving seaport with wharves, shipping offices, and custom-house complete, and a ribbon of steel winding out in the rear. That miracle was entirely due to the big American who sat looking out over his plate of cold chicken toward the stretch of yellow water that was being disturbed by the screws of the incoming boat.

It had started the morning Brent had ridden out on an old mule to look at the ruined smelters of an abandoned mine in the hills above the sea, and from that day an incessant stream of men had poured in to tear up the ground, erect machinery, and build workmen's compounds, till now there were silver dollars in plenty for any one who cared to soil his hands.

The dredging of the harbor had come next, and the building of wharves to accommodate the lighters; and then to crown the triumph of foreign industry the Concession had been moved to lay a light railroad into the interior, and a line of brisk, efficient steamers had been impelled to make Carados a port of call.

"It beats most of the beauty spots on the

Digitized by Google

mail-boat folders," said the director when he paid his first visit to the place. "And what's more there's a future ahead of it. It's a wonder some live man didn't come and tickle it into life before."

But a far-seeing fate had kept that job in store for Brent, as if conscious that few men would have been equal to the accomplishment. Other men with money behind them had attempted similar tasks on the same coast and the history of the past few years had been black with their failures.

They had failed because of the cupidity of politicians and the laziness of the populace, but chiefly because of their lack of galvanizing enthusiasm that was in Brent's core and fiber, and that made men work their fingers to the bone for him, almost against their will.

There was something about him that captured their imaginations, and like most Latin people they lived in their imaginations more than in their reason. This big American whose body seemed made of rawhide on a foundation of steel was not like other foreigners; although his head towered in the skies he was essentially one of themselves. His easiness of manner was evident in the way he talked to the waiter as he paid his bill.

"The boat's in, Pedrito."

"*Si*, señor."

"Did you see if there were many passengers?"

"Five or six, señor. That was all. There was one woman amongst them, *una Americana* I think."

"A woman? Ah, yes; the wife of one of the railroad engineers, I guess."

He gave the waiter some small change and strode out into the street which was deserted except for a few *cargadores* who hung about the door of a *pulperia*, or native store. They looked at the great man curiously, and yet with a sort of reverence, as though there was something of mystery about him in spite of his familiar way. And although Brent was not a vain man such looks always added nourishment to his pride.

Carados was the very shell of his soul. In the short space of ten years he had made it what it was and he was proud of his handiwork, proud also that the very loafers around the *pulperias* looked at him with a respectful awe and admiration.

There was something quite passionate in his attachment to the place and to the Concession that had provided a solid backbone to all the material progress he saw around him. He regarded it as a personal expression of himself, as a concrete manifestation of his life's work. That was why he had found a peculiar irritation in the few words at the end of Jardine's official letter asking him to show hospitality to the agent of the Lightning Trust who was due that afternoon.

He felt vaguely that there must be some reason at the back of it, and that this intimate little world he had created rested on insecure foundations. As he made his way down to the wharf one thought took shape in his mind.

"Well, he'll be a clever man if he can hide his cards from me. I guess I'll dig out the reason he's been sent down here before the sun goes down."

The boat had snuggled into the side of the wharf, and the winches had already begun to rattle, while a dozen *cargadores* clambered about the uncovered hatches. Near the bottom of the gangway the ancient Jehu of the place had drawn up his two white mules and his antiquated carriage and a colored steward was piling some luggage into it.

Brent was springing up the gangway with long strides when something at the top made him stop still, his fingers clutching tensely at the ropes, and his big figure taut and stiff, as though it had suddenly changed into steel. The girl standing at the top had a light dustcoat over her arm and there was an inscrutable smile in her eyes, but her poise was that of one who never found any circumstances disconcerting.

"You!" he said in amazement.

CHAPTER II

THE WOMAN IN THE CASE

FOR a while he could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes. She was standing there, evidently waiting for him to let her pass, as cool and unperturbed as though Carados were the most natural place for her to be, and moreover she was apparently alone. His own assurance was sufficient to meet most eventualities in life, and the slight hostility he felt toward her came to his aid and lent stiffening to his poise.

"You don't seem to be as surprised as I am," he said with a laugh.

"No," she said. "Why should I be?"

Digitized by Google

"Why shouldn't you be?" he countered. "You surely didn't expect to meet me in a little out-of-the-way place like this where the steamer only calls twice a month and they've never heard of Long Island."

"Oh, I don't know," she said flippantly. "I've met old acquaintances in all sorts of places. And besides your name was on some letters I was carrying."

"My name?"

"Letters of introduction," she supplemented. "I don't suppose they were necessary after all, but ten years is ten years and business is business."

There was the most amazing assurance about her. His gray eyes were regarding her critically and wondering just where the change lay. Even at nineteen there had been a capacity about her broad, low forehead and pointed chin, but the face that was raised to the level of his own now was not that of a girl but of an experienced woman of the world.

Youth still resided in the soft lines of her figure, but every part of her had tightened and tautened, and the very way she moved showed that she had become used to making important decisions every day of her life. Yet it was not any acquired masculinity in her that struck him; rather it was the way in which she was so certain of the power of her womanhood. She met his truculence now with an indifference that was almost like a blow.

"I can't make out why you're here at all," he said, rather surlily.

"Didn't you get any letter telling you I was coming?" she said.

"Hardly," he replied. "I haven't caught a glimpse of your writing for ten years—or is it eleven?"

"There's no need to strike the personal note," she said crisply. "Mr. Jardine assured me he was writing."

"Jardine?"

"I'm the Lightning Trust if that will help you out," she said. "Perhaps we'd better stick to that fact all the time."

His jaw dropped and his mouth hung ajar for a moment, for all the time they had been talking that probability had never floated within his line of vision. Newspapers had not come his way much, and until then this quick, brown-eyed girl had been merely "Maxie" for him; not the brilliant daughter of Jacob Ritter, the type and symbol of rampant feminism who had reporters hovering about her everywhere she went to describe her activities, and whose photograph figured regularly in the Sunday supplements as the modern business woman incarnate.

He could only vaguely comprehend the background of big business against which she was now moving, and with a flash of irony he realized that she was the agent he had come to meet, and possibly to use his best brains in thwarting.

"You're sure bent on astonishing me," he said sardonically. "It was a way you had since the beginning—But your man's waiting down there so I guess I'll drive with you to your hotel."

"There's no need," she said curtly. "I've made all arrangements."

"Nonsense," he said as he took hold of her grip. "It's my prescribed duty to show you hospitality. I can't let any personal feeling stand in the way of that."

He had recovered his bearings again and was able to meet her on her own ground. Perhaps it was surprising to both of them how quickly their intercourse had assumed the form of a duel. In the man's mind a mass of confused feelings was at work, and some memories, still raw and vivid, were cutting into the most sensitive part of his mind every time he looked at her. But her face had become alert, observant, impersonal.

They drove past the custom-house and the line of wharves to the new hotel on the outer edge of the town, and all the time she maintained a running fire of questions, as if she were intent on plucking the heart out of every material secret of the place.

He knew that she had always had the kind of intelligence that took even difficult things in at a brain-flash, but as he leaned back in the ramshackle equipage, probing her with his keen eyes, he saw that experience and judgment had been added to her, and that her mind was like a sharp instrument pointed for a particular purpose.

But what purpose, he asked himself? That her father was the president of the Lightning Trust he had known, but for him it had all the impersonality of a bloodless, inanimate corporation. He was hostile to it because he was aware in a vague way that it was trying to get its tentacles round Carados, but his faith in Jardine was so great that he had never visualized the danger as an immediate one.

It was merely something that loomed as a

Digitized by Google

menace in the distant future if Jardine died; and Jardine was not likely to die on the hither side of the allotted span. Yet here was the Trust's agent coming down to the Concession with Jardine's approval—and that agent, Maxie, of all people, a Maxie that had turned into a capable and powerful machine.

THE situation was too ironic for words, and every point of it was pressed home on him that evening as he wandered about the water-front waiting for her to finish her dinner. Many times he had contemplated the possibility of meeting her again, but the new life had taken firm hold of him, and the past was beginning to lose its grip. She had never mentioned the past once; it was as if every memory of it had burnt out in her brain.

Well, he was not going to remind her of it. He would treat her as if she were a man and unknown to him, the very way she demanded to be treated, and if her purpose was antagonistic to his own he would thwart her to the best of his ability. The urge of masculine pride was strong in him, and beside that there was a bitter memory or two and the knowledge that he might have to fight with the Trust for his life and his life's handiwork.

"I've got a horse for you," he said when he came up to her on the balcony a little later. "It's about seven miles out to the mine, but there's a fair road. We can start out first thing in the morning."

"Good!" she said laconically.

She was sitting in a low steamer-chair with her legs crossed, and she seemed to be making notes on a small pad. He gave her a glance of keen scrutiny.

"It would help me a lot," he said, "if you told me exactly what you wanted to see, Maxie."

"I want to see everything," she responded quickly.

"Everything," he repeated. "That's rather a big order."

"I've got nearly a week to do it in," she said abruptly. "The boat won't be going back for six days."

Her reticence seemed calculated to deflect his curiosity like an armor of steel. She was hard, he felt, hard all through. No one had ever given Brent any credit for softness, but he was conscious that he had met his match in this slip of a girl who sat tapping with her pencil on her pad and looking out over the rails to where a grove of palms lay asleep in the moonlight.

All sentiment seemed to be dried up in her, even the sentiment of old associations, and if she had any feeling toward him at all it was of the nature of animosity. He could not fathom the purposes that were being formed behind the veil of her smooth forehead and direct, practical eyes.

"What do you know of mining, anyhow?" he asked suddenly, as if thinking aloud.

"More than a little," she said. "I've learned a lot these last few years."

"So it seems," he said dryly.

She looked at him sharply.

"And I want you to remember that I'm down on business as the guest of your firm. It will keep us from no end of misunderstandings and cross-purposes if you hang on to that."

His laugh had no mirth in it.

"Business," he said. "Well, I scarcely figured you'd come down for pleasure. But what I can't quite understand is the nature of the business. You're not very enlightening about that. I'm to extend hospitality to you, and of course, personally, I'm quite charmed at the prospect; but you're the agent of the Lightning Trust, and it's never been very friendly to us. It's a peculiar position, you see, and if you'll lay your cards on the table I'll be happy to help you sort them out."

She yawned and rose, her eyes flinging him a challenge.

"There'll be time enough to do that when I'm going away—if it's necessary at all. You're merely the manager down here; isn't that so?"

His pride flashed out in an instant.

"I'm the man who made Carados and everything about it!"

She laughed easily.

"Oh, we won't quarrel about that. The question isn't in dispute—And I really didn't intend to hurt your vanity. If there are any cards to play I can promise to lay them on the table before I go."

It was the slightly mocking note in her voice that touched him on the raw as he went down the stairs with jingling spurs and out into the street. In every word she uttered he seemed to hear the ring of steel, and he knew her well enough to be sure that if it came to a real duel she would not fight with foils.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

IN THE BEGINNING

OF COURSE it had been a boy and girl affair, and it had ended with swift suddenness about the time the girl lengthened her frocks. Brent had never been quite sure which of them had been ultimately responsible for the abrupt severance, but for him it was final and complete.

They had grown up together because they lived next to one another in a country town in New England, both with middle-aged aunts who aimed at maintaining a superiority to the rest of the town and kept them in the seclusion of high-fenced gardens lest they should be contaminated by other children.

But the gardens adjoined, and the two children found that a wooden fence was not an insurmountable barrier, especially when their appetities for adventure had been whetted by rigorous confinement. Maxie Ritter at that time was a rowdy, tumble-haired girl with dark, rebellious eyes, an aggressive manner, and a general air of defying the universe. She was like some brown, wild thing that an ordered process of taming only fills with a greater desire for freedom.

About her mother she knew nothing, and her father was an amiable abstraction that only materialized once a month when he threw his growing business interests overboard for a couple of days and came down to see her, teasing her and showering presents upon her but never gaining any deep hold upon her affections.

She was lonely and at enmity with the world, and so was Don Brent. They met to share secrets and to compare notes, and the peculiar circumstances of their environment bound them together. Yet even from the beginning they had quarreled, and with an intensity unknown to most children. Maxie Ritter had a difficult temperament; that was generally admitted by every one who came in contact with her. So rigidly was she disciplined by her New England aunts that when once outside their control her chief impulse was to get her own way.

At the first hint of insult offered to her pride the blood would climb up to the roots of her dark, wavy hair and she would lose herself in a passion for retaliation. The generous impulses at the bottom of her nature were warped and deflected by these outbursts of wilfulness that were nourished rather than restrained by the atmosphere of her life.

As for Don Brent he was stubborn and a little morose. From his earliest years he had had a feeling girls were irrational creatures that called for a certain amount of toleration, but particularly for male guidance. He had a poor opinion of their ability and their wisdom, and there was a lordliness about his attitude that Maxie resented hotly.

The clash of wills went on throughout their whole childhood, for though Don Brent was fonder of Maxie than of any other human being his obstinacy would never allow him to surrender to her whims.

But this friendship remained as a permanent thing in their lives even when Brent went to Harvard, and they saw little of one another except in short holidays. The most direct cleavage in their interests occurred when Maxie was just seventeen. Jacob Ritter, coming down to his sister's place for his usual monthly visit seemed to suddenly awake to the fact that he had a daughter who was beautiful, and whom he had hitherto treated as nothing more than a mild encumbrance.

During all the years of her childhood he had been too much engrossed in his business interests to give any attention to domestic affairs, and at fifty-five he felt that it was time to think about leisure and comfort. He built a house on Long Island and took Maxie away to ornament it, finding a certain amount of pleasure in seeing how much money she could spend.

Meanwhile Don Brent, pursuing his dilatory studies at Harvard, felt that she was gradually drifting away from him. They wrote to one another secretly, but neither of them had the faculty of self-expression, and the circumstances of their lives were largely different.

The daughter of Jacob Ritter, president of the Lightning Trust, did not want for admirers. She was courted and flattered, and soon grew into a woman, with a very precise knowledge of her own worth, while Brent, three years older, was still a boy, undecided as to what he was really going to do in life.

It was in the path of mining engineering that his inclinations finally led him, but he had no particular love for the profession.

Digitized by Google

Indeed, although possessed of brain and character, he had no real incentive to spur him on. In Belgium and France he idled away his wander-year, visiting different mines for the purpose of gaining experience as to their working, but largely frittering away his time in cafés with other young Americans of his own age.

At twenty-three he was hardly more than a big, clumsy youth, indolent and lacking in ambition, with no proper realization that the money which had been laid aside for his education was nearly at an end.

IT WAS thus that he appeared to the bright, hard eyes of Maxie Ritter when they met in a little town in Bavaria where students' holiday courses were in progress. She was touring Europe with her father, and dexterously guided that amiable parent to the place whose name was postmarked on Don's last letter.

Yet even before she met Don Brent she was angry with him, for to her he was an idler and a dilettante who had never taken a proper grip of his own life. She herself was a hard, practical little person, resolute and determined in her attitude toward life and ruthless in her contempt for indolence and weakness. And the only weakness in her own fiber was her girlish attachment to Don Brent.

Perhaps it was natural that they should quarrel from the start. The old childish conflict of will was renewed with increased bitterness, for the girl felt that somehow she had been betrayed. It had been looked upon as a settled thing that they should marry some day; the idea had been bred in their very bones, though never put in definite words.

Yet once in the twilight when they walked home from the ruined Schloss and the young man stopped still to talk vaguely of the future the girl drew away from him with flaming scorn in her eyes.

"Marry you, Don Brent?" she said indignantly. "No, I rather guess not. When I marry it will be a man and not a dreaming boy who'll sign the books with me. You've wasted your life up to now, and you're going on wasting it. In all your days there's not been a thing you've done that called forth a real effort of will, or that you can look back on with pride. You never will do anything now. You've lost any bone and muscle that ever was in you."

There had been an interchange of phrases that stung and words that cut deep, and it had been the last of their quarrels. Till then Brent had never found himself, and had been in danger of letting his life dribble away in aimless futilities, but the contempt in Maxie Ritter's eyes stirred something in his blood.

She was the one person in the world who could stimulate his will, and when she left him his chief impulse was to triumph over her by falsifying her prophecies.

From that very night his reformation could be traced, but it was only six months later that he found what he wanted. Perhaps it was mere chance that brought him to Carados, but it was imagination and knowledge that allowed him to see what wealth lay in the deserted mine in the hills above the town. It had been taken up and abandoned alternately by half-a-dozen companies during the past two generations, till it had become a joke among the population along the coast.

The sloth of its managers, the blackmail of officials, and the instability of life in the republic had prevented it from ever being a paying proposition, but Brent had seen that what it chiefly lacked had been the direction of a man of capacity and power. And his sheer enthusiasm and faith had been sufficient to sway the mind of Jardine, a financier he had met on the boat going back to New York, till the reckless old capitalist was persuaded to stand behind him and give him a free hand.

It had been all Brent wanted. He had gone into the thing first of all to redeem himself in Maxie Ritter's eyes, but he was held later on by a deep love of the new world he was creating. The character and capacity that had so profoundly impressed Jardine during a casual journey stood him in good stead.

Some access of power and determination seemed to have come to him the night Maxie Ritter had cut him adrift with a sneer, and when he thought of her there was some gratitude mixed with his resentment.

But he had very rarely thought of her till now. He was King of Carados, and that was enough. Until that afternoon when he had found her standing, poised and truculent, at the head of the gangway she had figured in his memory chiefly as a wilful, inscrutable child, who by a rare chance had enabled him to find himself.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

THE CHALLENGE

ALL the week of her stay there was no word from the agent of the Lightning Trust as to her ultimate purpose, and Brent's pride kept him from bringing up the matter again. He treated her with an ironic deference, supplying her with any information she wanted, and laying aside all the immediate work he had on hand to place himself at her disposal.

Yet the issue between them had become plain, and Brent was under no illusion as to her mission. On the day his boat was to leave again a small boy from the hotel brought him a message, and he went from his office across the plaza to find her seated at a table near the window opening out upon the balcony, a litter of plans and maps in front of her.

She looked up the moment his big figure filled the doorway, but when their eyes met he saw that the challenging look had been supplanted by the preoccupied intentness of a woman immersed in a matter of practical business. She pushed a cigar-box over toward him and he sat down, regarding her with a tolerant smile as though she were a child occupied in some solemn game.

"Well," she said, "I've made up my mind. I promised in the beginning to lay all my cards on the table before I went, though of course Mr. Jardine is the chief person concerned. I'm going to arrange for the transfer of the Concession."

He laughed.

"Do you really mean that?"

"I've said so," she replied curtly. "It was the sole purpose in my mind when I came."

His eyes regarded her ironically.

"You're an extraordinarily innocent person, Maxie," he said. "And you really think that the transfer of the Jardine Concession could be arranged as easily as the buying of a yard of ribbon in a Broadway store?"

"Not quite," she responded imperturbably. "It will require considerably more money for one thing."

"H'm," he said. "The power of money is the chief illusion of novices in the world of business. It takes some years to get over that. If you knew as much about the Lightning Trust as I do, though, you'd know that they'd have gotten hold of the Jardine Concession three years ago if mere money could have brought off the deal."

She looked at him challengingly.

"And what stood in their way, then?"

"About a hundred and nine things," he said carelessly. "And each one of them taken separately would have been a sufficient barrier. The thing that was most obvious to their intelligence, though, was the fact that old Jardine would sooner pawn his soul than sell out."

"That's the personal factor," she said promptly. "I've made adequate allowance for that."

"Have you?"

"I brought letters of introduction to you from Mr. Jardine," she said. "That in itself is fairly conclusive. With your knowledge of the world you will have observed that a woman can do some things in a week that a man or a corporation couldn't do in a year. Oh, yes; I can assure you that I haven't forgotten the personal factor."

Beneath the light raillery of her voice there was a sureness, a certitude, that made him wonder if he had underestimated her power after all. She was leaning forward with one elbow resting on the table, her chin in her hand, and her dark hair coming down low over eyes that seemed to probe him with deliberate mockery. He rose and sauntered about the room with his hands in his pockets.

"You're clever, Maxie," he said. "But you don't seem to have cottoned on to what the real personal factor is."

She looked at him ironically.

"I didn't understand you had any controlling interest."

"Perhaps not," he said. "I've been too busy living to have anything to do with the financial side of the concern. Money wasn't what I was out for or I could have made my own terms with Jardine any time this last eight years. Yes, that's the simple truth.

"Some men go after one thing and some after another, and I've never had any hankering to line my coat with dollar-bills. But you make a big mistake if you think money-power has the same dynamic energy down here as it has at home. Jardine's financial backing was only one of the assets of the concession."

Digitized by Google

"Indeed? What were the others?"

He stopped short and turned round, meeting her eyes.

"The chief one was my character," he said simply.

She was looking at him half-curiously, half-mockingly.

"I've heard they call you the King of Carados," she said.

It was intended to be an ironic thrust, but somehow it glanced off his big frame as if he were clad in invisible armor. He merely looked down at her with an amused smile.

"And you didn't grasp what it meant," he said. "Well let me tell you something about it. When I came down here first there wasn't an Indian for miles around who wouldn't have spat at the suggestion of working for a *gringo*. They'd have starved out on the *campo* first. You saw that little village up at the mine with its crowd of contented workmen?

"Every man-jack of them had to be won, and I had to do it by proving that I wasn't the usual brand of exploiter who meant to leave them with three dents in the pocket at the end of a six-months' contract. And then there's the railroad. There wouldn't have been a yard of rail laid if mere dollars had been the directing force. This little republic is peculiar, and its people and politicians are peculiar—particularly its politicians. They have to be won too."

"Bribed, you mean," she said laconically.

"Call it that if you like," he said carelessly. "But mere bribery wouldn't do much with men like Miguel Lepanto and José Lopez. They'd keep on bleeding the hand that forks out dollar-bills to them till they've drained it white.

"The coast of this republic is strewn with the wrecks of foreign corporations that thought financial backing and palm-oil were the two things necessary for success. But the Jardine Concession isn't a corporation; it's a man that the people trust and the politicians respect and fear. That in a nutshell is the personal factor."

HE BIT the end off a cigar and looked down at her, all his masculinity seeming to thrust itself forward aggressively in triumph. Yet the sheer physical magnetism which had been used successfully on so many men had apparently no effect on this woman he had once loved.

"All this is rather by the way," she said dryly. "The Lightning Trust wouldn't necessarily make any change in the management."

His short, harsh laugh cut in upon her words.

"Oh," he said. "You'd like to take me over with the plant?"

"For the present," she retorted. "That arrangement would suit us very well."

"You're ambitious," he said.

"That's not my idea of ambition," she parried. "And I don't see why a mere transfer of ownership should make any difference to you or the rest of the employees."

She leaned back and looked at him critically through half-closed eyes, and of such mettle was he made that she had never seemed so wonderful to him as now when she was attempting to put a knife to his throat. He had underrated her capacity; that was the truth. She was a woman in a million, and if cleverness and resource carried their full weight she would win out in any effort to which she put her hand.

"You're determined to shut your eyes to the real position of things," he said. "I don't want to boast, but you've got to realize that I'm the Jardine Concession. Any peon, politician or white man round about here would acquaint you with that fact. Jardine is merely the thing that happened to dole out the initial capital.

"If he chose to sell the Concession over my head he could do it, I suppose, but it would be worth just as much to the buyer as a quarter-section staked out at the Pole. I'm the cement that knit the whole thing together, and that holds it in place now. And Jardine can't sell me as if I were a piece of fixed machinery."

Her lips merely flickered in a confident smile.

"There wasn't any suggestion of that," she said. "I merely gave you the chance of staying on. If it's a matter of pride——"

"Even I may be allowed some pride," he put in grimly.

She looked at him with straight eyes.

"Is it because I'm a woman that you won't work for me?"

"No; not quite that," he said.

"Then why?"

"It would be difficult to put all the rea-

Digitized by Google

sons in three words," he said dryly. "I've already given you some, but apparently you refuse to understand."

"I understand that if I get the Concession transferred I'd have to bring in another manager," she said. "Is that so?"

"Quite," he replied. "And the whole thing would go to pieces in three months."

"Why?" she demanded. "What would you do?"

"Nothing," he said. "It wouldn't be necessary for me to do anything but stand aside and fold my arms."

She rose haughtily, two pink spots glowing in her cheeks.

"I think," she said, "that you've got a ridiculously exaggerated idea of your importance. And we shall see."

He laughed, his big figure towering above her.

"We won't get an opportunity of seeing, Maxie."

"And why?" she demanded.

"Simply because Jardine won't sell. I'm ready to stake a level thousand on that. He'd rather cut off his right hand."

For reply she tilted her chin.

"I suppose I can take it for granted that when the new manager comes you'll show him the usual amount of courtesy!"

His eyes responded to her challenge.

"Oh yes," he said. "I'll have the wharf strewn with roses when he lands. But I don't see him landing. It's easier to see Jardine's face turning to stone when you go to him with your offer."

And with a jaunty laugh he took his hat and sauntered down the stairs.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW FACTOR

HE SAW her off at the boat an hour later, a neat figure in her plaid skirt and white shirt-waist, glancing down at him from over the deck-rails with the challenging look still in her eyes. All the while she had been there the feeling of being engaged in a duel had never left him, and it remained with him still. It had little connection with the business ideal.

He had no fear that Jardine would sell the mine to the Lightning Trust over his head, no fear at all, for he had often heard the old capitalist boast that his chief interest in the Concession lay in thwarting the Trust.

But the significant thing for Brent in the affair was that Maxie had not forgotten him. It was not indifference but sheer animosity he read in her eyes; she hated him and had set out to break his pride. No woman, he reflected, ever forgave a man for ceasing to love her, even if she herself had never loved him in the beginning, and Maxie would move heaven and earth to triumph over him.

With his own wounds healed by the passage of time he could view her efforts with detached amusement and admiration, and take pride in the fact that Carados would prove to her how fully he had found himself.

"She must have realized it more than she admitted," he thought. "No one with her kind of brain could have missed the fact that the Concession's built up on my back."

He realized it himself more fully than ever during the next few days, for in every *pulperia* there were rumors and excited whispers about a revolution that was threatening the eastern seaboard of the republic. It was the first time for years there had been any restlessness, and Brent knew his people well enough to understand how quickly the flame would spread if once the fire was well started.

With politics he had never had any traffic, though in the beginning he had realized that if he wished to be let alone he would have to pay out bribes pretty freely to the party in power, and both he and Jardine had accepted that as one of the conditions of existence. After that he had no interest in anything but the preservation of the status quo.

But the Government had been in office for nearly nine years, and in more than one town along the coast there were mutterings of discontent. Ramiro, a general who had been cashiered for some trivial offense or other, was out upon the mountains with a handful of loyal followers, and though he had had no great success in his skirmishes with the troops sent out to arrest him he was gaining adherents day by day. And reports of his doings, exaggerated as they passed from mouth to mouth, floated over the mountains toward Carados.

Brent had heard the rumors as he rode back and forth from the mine to the town, but he paid little attention to them. He felt sure that whatever Government was in power the Concession was safe, and that the most ignorant revolutionary general

Digitized by Google

would not dare to interfere with American property. Yet he knew well that Ramiro had his agents in Carados, and that José Lopez, the politician, was one of them.

The latter, a thin, embittered man, had been a principal in every revolution the country had known for a generation, but had never succeeded in getting his due share of the spoils of office. A withered, wiry old fellow, with dark, inflammatory eyes, and a positive genius for intrigue, he had plotted steadily to overthrow each Government that had come into power, and his cleverness alone had saved him from the swift retribution that was dealt out to his kind.

But from the beginning he had done everything to appease Brent and to win his support. His clear Latin brain had recognized that Brent was Carados, and that he could hope for nothing until this powerful foreigner who had captured the hearts of the populace was on his side.

He approached Brent one day as he sat at dinner in the hotel overlooking the shore-front where a swarm of *cargadores* were busy unloading a lighter full of timber.

"Well, señor," he began tentatively. "It seems as if something had come to light up the darkness at last. The handful of robbers in the capital are beginning to tremble."

Brent glanced up with a look of indifference.

"What's the news?" he asked shortly.

"All the little towns on the eastern coast are declaring for General Ramiro," said Lopez, a sudden light coming into his fanatical eyes. "It was only to be expected. The people have had enough of tyranny. They have been ground down too long under the heels of Fernandez and his gang. Only let the general show himself here and they would rise in a flash to welcome him."

Brent laughed.

"You'd better speak less loud, señor, or the Government agents will have you by the heels."

But the warning only stiffened the old revolutionist's pride.

"I have defied them for years both here and in the capital," he retorted. "Why should I be afraid of them now when their knees are trembling? The day of their power has gone."

"H'm," grunted Brent. "It was said to be gone five years ago. The people were supposed to be smoldering with discontent then."

"But there was no one to lead them," said Lopez swiftly. "They were waiting in patience for a leader to arise. Now there is the great General Ramiro, whose fame is known from one end of the republic to the other. Do you think they will hesitate when he calls them to his banners?"

"I don't know," said Brent. "And I don't care very much. My people seem fairly well content."

Lopez leaned over the table and his eyes were dark with earnestness.

"You have power over them, señor, and they are waiting for a word."

Brent raised his eyebrows.

"From me?"

"If it was known that you sympathized with Ramiro," said Lopez quickly, "the whole town would declare for him. And Carados is the richest corner of the republic. If it supported Ramiro his triumph would be swift and that gang of freebooters would be dethroned forever."

"Bah!" said Brent. "What difference would it make to me? I've kept out of politics from the beginning and I'm going to keep out of them till the end. That's the whole secret of my strength. I stand for law and order and settled government, and as long as I get them I don't care which side holds office."

The dark eyes of his companion flickered.

"Yet you can have no love for these men, señor," he persisted. "You've had to pay heavy toll to them."

"And I'd probably have to pay more to the next lot," said Brent.

"No," Lopez cut in swiftly. "You would have to pay nothing. I can assure you, señor, that you would never be robbed by the Government of Ramiro. Would a man who knows Washington and Paris as he knows the *campo* ever wish to rob those who are bringing the benefits of civilization to his country? The idea is absurd, señor. I, who have been a friend of General Ramiro's, know that he is a supporter of enlightenment and an enemy of bribery and corruption."

Brent stood up and lit a cigar.

"Perhaps," he said. "But I'm a neutral, and politics don't interest me any more than *monte* or *chusas*. I want peace and a quiet life. Those are the only conditions under which the Concession can prosper."

Digitized by Google

HE WENT out, leaving Lopez sitting with a frown on his forehead and a halo of cigar-smoke round his head. Yet it was hardly true to say that politics did not interest him for he had a very direct interest in the preservation of order and any one who conspired against the existing scheme of things was his enemy.

He knew that the employees of the mine were contented, but at any time a wind of unrest might blow through their inflammable souls. And sometimes he had a bad dream of burning villages, torn-up rails, and streets that were filled with the rattle of musketry and the shouting of excited combatants. It was his intention to use all the influence he had to prevent that.

But as he walked across the plaza to the office he thought very little about the impending revolution. He remembered that it was just two weeks that day since Maxie had left, and that she would be back in New York by now. Waking and sleeping during the last few days her face had been very much before him, her provocative eyes issuing a clear challenge to him.

It was no mere interest in a business deal that he read there; it was the will to conquer. And it stirred memories of her as a girl, a reckless, domineering girl, always taunting him about his lack of courage, and daring him to do dangerous feats. That unquenchable fire in her had been inexplicable to him then, but he understood it better now.

She was one of those women whose spirit responds to nothing but sheer masculinity, and he had not the power or the inclination to show her that he could subdue her to his will.

"Little spitfire!" he thought, as he entered the tin-roofed office. "If it came to a trial of strength now I could show her who was strongest. But it won't. She's up against——"

The sight of the telegram lying waiting on his desk broke the continuity of his thoughts. He ripped it open and read it carefully, a flush creeping up under the tan of his forehead and his body becoming rigid.

Swasey, the chief clerk, watching him out of the corner of his eyes, was surprised to see the change in his face, for never in the ten years that he had known him had the big manager allowed any sudden happening to disturb his stoical calm. And Swasey who had just been out on the wharf talking to the *capataz* of *cargadores* about the success of Ramiro and his rebels had a brain inflamed and prepared for disaster.

But when Brent turned round he had resumed his careless *sangfroid*.

"I've got to go to New York immediately," he said.

Swasey raised his eyebrows.

"Immediately?"

"Yes," said Brent. "There's a boat leaving tomorrow. Ferguson will be able to look after the mine while I'm away and you can attend to things here. I don't know how long I'll be, but it won't be a day longer than I can help."

There was an uneasy look on Swasey's face, and he twisted his mustaches dubiously. The temperament he had inherited from his Spanish mother gave him a better understanding of the people and the place than was allowed to most foreigners, and he was not quite comfortable in his mind about the position of things.

"Is it absolutely necessary to go away now?" he saked.

"Quite," said Brent. "I wouldn't go if it wasn't. Why do you ask?"

Swasey shrugged his shoulders.

"I've heard some of the *cargadores* talking. They're full of the rising on the east coast. Ramiro is a bit of a hero with them. He used to be residential governor of this province in the old days."

Brent's face had the impatience of a man who had been bred in another atmosphere.

"But, good Lord, man, what does it matter to them?" he snapped testily. "They're earning good wages, and they've got everything to lose by the country being disturbed. Why should they want to take sides with Ramiro or any other disgruntled politician with a sore head?"

Swasey merely smiled feebly, for he knew that it was impossible to explain.

"They're all right while you're here," he said. "But they're not much different from a herd of steers on the *campo*. They like excitement and it doesn't take much to stampede them."

There was a frown on Brent's face as he turned on his heel.

"I'm not likely to stay away any longer than I can help," he said.

Then, half to himself, he grunted:

"Yes; I guess I'll come back whatever happens."

Digitized by Google

The muttered words were only partly audible to Swasey, but his curiosity was stirred as he watched his chief stride out of the door and make his way over to the hotel yard where his horse was saddled in waiting. The chief clerk's brain was always busy with the affairs of the Concession, but personal affairs were even more attractive to his mind.

He had a quick eye for a pretty woman, and he had never solved the mystery of Maxie Ritter's appearance at Carados, though he had given the matter much private thought. Brent was like a granite rock; there was no getting any confidences out of him.

"There must be something brewing or he wouldn't go away now," he thought. "Yes, I guess the appearance of that woman was the beginning of some trouble or other."

Then a wad of paper caught his eye and he walked over and picked it up. It was the telegraph form that Brent had crumpled in his hand and thrown away.

CHAPTER VI

MAXIE RITTER SCORES

BUT the few words from Jardine asking Brent to come to New York at the earliest possible moment were hardly as enlightening to Swasey as they were to his chief. For Brent knew that there could be only one reason for the summons. Maxie and the Lightning Trust had won on the first deal and had persuaded Jardine to open negotiations for the transfer of the Concession; there could be no doubt of that.

To Brent who had come to regard the mine as his own intimate property there was something acutely exasperating in the thought that another man had power to sell it over his head.

It was the creation of his hand and brain, the concrete expression of years of devotion and self-sacrifice, and never since the beginning had he thought of it in terms of money-value. He took pride in every part of it, but especially in the trust the workpeople placed in him, and in the way every man and woman looked at him in the street.

"And Jardine has done nothing but sit tight and read the reports," he thought bitterly.

It was the chief thing he thought about as he leaned over the bows of the boat watching the opal water being churned up by the screw. He had only been back to New York once, and then merely on a business trip, since he had first come to Carados, for the place had a firm grip on him, and his holidays had been spent along the coast looking out for new fields of development. And now he was going back to fight for what he conceived to be his very existence.

If the mine passed out of his control he would hardly know what to do with his life: that fact presented itself to him very vividly as he paced the deck by day or lay awake in his cabin during the quiet watches of the night. And he realized to the full that it was Maxie he was fighting, her intelligence, her unwavering determination, her queer animosity. If he were beaten now he would be humiliated forever.

But when he reached New York the battle was already over. He sat in a leather chair in Jardine's office while the old capitalist paced up and down uneasily, fumbling with excuses at one time, blustering at another, and again trying to pass the matter off with a light jest. Brent watched him with a steady hostility, his brain too dazed to find words.

It was five years since Jardine had made a trip to Carados, and he was amazed at the change that had come over him in so short a space of time. He was no longer the rugged, reckless man of ideas who was always ready to risk a million on the turn of a card; he was a nervous, uncertain old man for whom the world had suddenly grown too big. Vain, boastful, easily overcome by flattery, he was more interested in what he had done in the past than in the possibilities that lay in the lap of the future.

"And you let them browbeat you into selling—you?" Brent found himself saying. "Time and again you've assured me that you'd rather be trodden in the dirt than make room for the Lightning Trust. I've spent all these hard, sweating years for nothing. I built on you, thinking I was building on solid rock—and you've let me down, hard."

Jardine wiped his eye-glasses with his handkerchief.

"My dear Brent, you don't understand," he countered. "If it had been a fight, if the Trust had tried to get the better of me, I'd have fought as long as I had a dollar in my pocket. You've known me long enough

Digitized by Google

to understand that I never back down or keep out of the way when there's trouble brewing. But everything has been friendly and aboveboard in this affair, and I don't see what difference it makes to you as manager. The Trust isn't one of those skinflint concerns——"

Brent looked at him sharply.

"It was a woman who talked you over."

Jardine hesitated.

"I admit that, but——"

"Women are the devil," Brent interjected gloomily.

His companion took a turn up and down the room.

"One could hardly say that of Ritter's daughter," he put in amiably. "She's one of the most charming women imaginable. And she's got her father's head on her shoulders, I can assure you. This Carados affair is her province, apparently, and she's got too much sense to starve it in the matter of expenditure, or to interfere with arrangements she doesn't understand. You'll have just as free a hand as ever, Brent."

Brent looked at him as he walked up and down the room with his hands behind his back and the impossibility of making him realize what he had done forced itself home to his brain. Jardine had lived all his life among the unrealities of Wall Street, so that he simply could not grasp another man's devotion to an idea or his pride in a place.

"Do you think I'm going to work for her?" he asked contemptuously.

"And why not?" said Jardine, with raised eyebrows.

"You wouldn't understand if I told you," said Brent shortly.

His companion looked puzzled.

"Is it because she's a woman?" he queried.

"No," said Brent decisively, "it would make no difference who it was. I'm not going to be transferred from one owner to another, as if I were a shipment of dry-goods or a batch of rolling stock. I've worked for the Concession because it was my idea and I've had complete freedom in anything I wanted to do. In Carados I'm the *Señor Administrador*, the man who has built everything and done everything, and the people think I can bring rain in a dry season or make the wind blow.

"I'm the biggest man that ever happened thereabouts, and they're not sure that my horse's feet aren't shod with gold. They wouldn't feel the same if the whole thing was transferred to the Lightning Trust, and the only difference between me and one of the screeners was that I got a thicker pay-envelope. Besides—but what's the good of trying to explain!"

Jardine gave a quizzical smile.

"You always had a confoundedly queer pride in the place. I don't see how it can matter to you what a crowd of colored people think."

For a while Brent looked at him ironically.

"Is that the way it seems to you?" he asked at last.

"Frankly, yes," said Jardine, "but I don't want to argue with you. I know that if you're determined to leave, all the reason on God's earth wouldn't persuade you. You were always so——bullheaded, Brent, and set on having your own way.

"But I've done well out of the mine, both in the past and now, and I'm not going to be tight-fisted when it comes to a settlement between us. You've never had your due for all the work you've put into it; I admit that and I'm ready to make compensation."

THE idea that compensation could be made in hard cash was so evident in his eyes that Brent could say nothing more. He made his way out into Broadway feeling as if the world had suddenly sunk beneath his feet, leaving him suspended in mid-air. The throng of pale-faced people scurrying along as if on urgent business produced an immense feeling of loneliness within him.

His life's handiwork which had absorbed all the thoughts and energies of the best years of his manhood was his no longer, and he felt as if he had nothing to grip hold of in a world that was rushing by him. The King of Carados stood on the edge of the curb looking over the heads of the people who hurried by him as if they were cattle of which he was not in charge.

It was not merely that he was dethroned; he was defeated. That was the part of the business that he could not bring home to Jardine. Maxie, with the Lightning Trust's dollars behind her, had vanquished him at the first crossing of rapiers, and

Digitized by Google

humiliated him in his own eyes and in those of the people of Carados.

He would no longer be the *Señor Administrador*, riding across the Plaza with his wide sombrero and polished silver spurs, the beau ideal of the women who stood looking down at him from behind the lattices, the hero of the young men.

He would be merely a foreign mining engineer, loafing about in hotels and clubs to pick up billets from English and American companies, and all his glory and pride would be gone. Donald Brent, the man who had made Carados, gazed unseeingly at the passing street-cars, and there was a great bitterness in his soul.

A passing newsboy thrust a paper into his hand and he forked out a nickel mechanically, hardly conscious of the transaction till half-an-inch of black type caught his eye:

THE MONTACO REBELLION

RAMIRO THREATENS CAPITAL

It riveted his attention and brought a flock of new thoughts to his brain. He had been disposed to treat the rebellion lightly as a mere sporadic outbreak, but the mere fact that it had attracted the attention of the New York press showed that it was more serious than he had allowed himself to believe. And Ramiro was not without strong supporters in Carados. There were others besides Lopez who would be glad of a change of government, the *caballeros* of the Esperanza Club, and some of the merchants of the Plaza.

They had always been resentful of the incursions of foreign industry, and the cry of "They are fattening on us like vultures," would serve as well as anything else to inflame the passions of the simple-minded populace. Brent knew better than most people that it was his character alone, and the openness of all his dealings that had reconciled them to the thought of the great silver mine of Carados being in foreign hands.

And standing there among the traffic he once more had a vision of burning houses, a torn-up railroad track, and a mad populace swarming along the wrecked streets.

"H'm," he muttered to himself, "all the dollars of the Trust won't help it much then. And it won't be my funeral, anyway."

But that thought did not console him much. Carados was his creation; he was bone of its bone, no matter who was the nominal owner of the mine. And spinning back to his hotel in the taxi, he saw one reason for the newspaper's interest in the Montaco rebellion.

On the back page there was an interview with Maxie Ritter, and a short article announcing that this Queen Catherine of the business world, this incarnation of woman's genius, had taken over the Carados silver mine on behalf of the Lightning Trust, and was going to supervise its administration herself.

Her portrait, blurred a little, but still recognizable, smiled up at him confidently from the printed page. It brought a flush to his cheeks and a stirring to his pulses. He read over the crisp phrases of the interview and in every word he seemed to detect the ring of personal triumph as if she were talking to him face to face and openly proclaiming her victory.

It was exactly thus she had taunted him over and over again when they were boy and girl and a host of memories crowded in upon his brain. It was only now when he was defeated that he felt the real flush of conflict, but he reflected that even yet there was a possibility of a slip between the cup and the lip.

"I'll have to see her before I leave," he thought as he folded up his paper. "Yes, I guess I can't leave New York without telling her that the battle is only beginning."

CHAPTER IV

LOPEZ MOVES

THE daughter of the president of the Lightning Trust lived by herself in a small flat overlooking Central Park, and daily went down-town to her offices hanging on to the strap of a street-car. That was one of the features that the special article writers seized upon, emphasizing the modesty of the little flat on the fourth floor and the fact that she lived alone.

There were rumors that she had quarreled with her father and that she was breaking off her connection with the Trust in order to set up in business on her own

Digitized by Google

account. No other reason was apparent for her leaving her father's mansion on Long Island and creating a little ménage of her own.

But as a matter of fact there had been no quarrel. Jacob Ritter was not the man to alienate his only daughter or to question the wisdom of anything she did. He took a whole-hearted pride in her, even in her whims and feminist ideas, and he had the liberal mind of a man who refused to shape his life by set theories whether in business or in the home.

His daughter had been humored ever since she had come to live with him, and if she had told him she was going to marry a plumber he would have merely put on a quizzical smile and admitted that she knew her own business best. When therefore he heard that she purposed having a home of her own in the future he merely shrugged his shoulders and said:

"All right, Maxie. If you'd been a boy I guess you'd have done just that by now, and you don't allow there's any difference between a woman and a man. But if ever you get tired of living alone don't keep away out of pride but come right back."

Maxie Ritter had not gotten tired of living alone. At least, she told herself that what loneliness crept in upon her was the price of liberty, and that anyhow it was the right thing for a woman of her views and interests to have a home of her own. Her father's house with its cushioned comfort, its four automobiles, and its army of servants roused whatever was stiff and unresilient in her nature, and her instinct was toward a more Spartan mode of life.

But when Brent's ring came at the door she was lying back in a rocking-chair reading a novel by the light of a red-shaded lamp, a cup of black coffee at her elbow, and her slippered feet resting on a high footstool. She welcomed him with an inscrutable smile, closing her book and extending a small, capable hand.

"Well?" she said.

He remained standing, looking even bigger in the padded stiffness of his black broadcloth than in the loose easiness of the clothes she had seen him wearing last. There was a detachment, even a haughtiness about his attitude, and the strong clean lines of his face were rigid as though carved out of steel.

"You want me to admit that you've got the best of it, I suppose," he said.

"And you're determined to admit nothing," she countered. "Very well; it doesn't matter. You were a little too incredulous about my power."

"It was mere money-power," he interjected.

"Then you've changed your ideas of money-power," she said quickly. "You were strong in your belief that all the dollars of the Lightning Trust wouldn't avail anything in getting hold of the mine."

His laugh had a jarring note in it.

"I was wrong about Jardine, I know," he admitted. "I thought he was made out of granite instead of soft putty. If I'd known what he was I'd have engineered him out of the control of the Concession long ago. There were plenty of other men with capital who were willing to come behind me. You can claim a score in getting round Jardine, but that's a long way from working the Carados mine successfully."

"It's the beginning," she said.

"Perhaps the beginning of the end," he supplemented. "You've heard that there's a rebellion in progress down there; there are black headlines about it in the papers tonight. News travels slowly, though, and things happen fast in the republic. Who knows but that the mine-buildings may be afire by now, and the valuable new plant and property of the Lightning Trust fit for nothing but the scrap-heap?"

She reached carelessly for a form that was lying on the table beside her.

"You're rather a sensationalist," she said, "but I've just had a wire from the manager to say that everything is normal."

"The manager?" he interjected.

"Of course, I sent a manager down to take charge as soon as the deal was completed," she said. "A temporary manager I mean."

"Why temporary?"

She looked at him with frank eyes.

"I thought you'd be sensible enough to face the facts and change your mind."

He laughed. There was an imperturbable audacity about her that he was forced to admire in spite of himself. She looked softer, too, less militant than the crisp-voiced woman who had come into his office hardly a month ago to throw her challenge like a glove in his face. Perhaps it was the soft lines of her cerise tea-gown or the ef-

Digitized by Google

fect of the red-shaded light on her rounded throat and masses of dark hair.

"Change my mind?" he repeated. "Oh no, I'm hardly likely to do that, Maxie. I can be beaten, but not tamed and fed with a spoon."

"Of course I allowed for your pride," she said dryly. "It always did stick out in rough knobs all over you. And you've an odd prejudice against women in business. It's rather old-fashioned, you know, but you've lived a long while out of the world."

He said swiftly.

"Do you think I can regard you just as a woman in business?"

FOR the fraction of a second she averted her eyes.

"I don't see why not," she said. "The fact that we knew each other in the past needn't necessarily intrude upon our business relations. I can promise you that I won't remind you of it. And except for one or two details you'd have just as much liberty as when you were running the show for Jardine."

There was an air of impersonality about her, as if she were interested in nothing but the welfare of the Concession. She tapped a silver paper-knife on the arm of her chair and regarded him with eyes into which a certain curiosity had entered.

"One or two details?" he repeated. "How much does that mean?"

"For one thing the Carados Concession is my province," she said. "I intend to come down a good deal and I'll be the nominal administrator."

"H'm," he said.

"That's up against your ideas of the proper hierarchy of things," she said. "You're too vain to let people know you could take orders from a woman in any possible circumstances."

He stood with his back to the radiator and looked down at her.

"You talk as if it were a matter of abstract theory," he said. "It isn't. I've no objection in the abstract to women controlling things, though I've never seen them do it with any sort of success outside the home. But Carados is considerably south of New York, and it's got a different set of instincts, laws, and conventions. It's a world for men."

There was a trace of dogmatism in the way he spoke that brought her own militant pride into play again.

"That means you definitely won't have anything to do with it, I suppose," she said.

"You had my answer about that in the beginning, Maxie," he said. "And I'm not likely to go soft just because Jardine has."

"Then it's warfare between us?"

"Call it what you like. I'm not going to raise a hand, but the Trust will be glad to come to terms with me inside of three months."

"Indeed?" she said. "Why, please?"

"Because it will find it's bought nothing but a plant," he said impressively. "Because it will find that all its dollars can't buy men's souls. In a few weeks the population of the mine will drift off to the *campo* again, or rally to Ramiro's flag.

"They never liked work for its own sake and the Trust hasn't got any better name than the other companies that have tried to exploit them in years gone by. Their suspicion of the *gringo* is bred in their very bones, and they won't have anything to do with a concern from which I stand aloof."

She looked at him carelessly.

"There might possibly be something in that," she said. "But of course I anticipated it in the beginning. I've arranged to get some batches of Italians who've finished up at the Panama if necessary."

"What?" he said in amazement.

"Oh, yes," she said imperturbably. "I talked it all over with Davis before I sent him down. Why are you so surprised? You must know very little about me if you think I would enter into a matter like this without taking every contingency into consideration."

She was leaning back almost languidly among the cushions with her back to the red-shaded light and her face was half-hidden in the shadows, yet there was a sureness and certitude about her poise.

It occurred to him that she was right, that after all he did know very little about her. She was not merely the wilful, aggressive girl he had played with. There was a depth and force about her character, a mystery about the workings of her mind. But the contingency she outlined to him appeared so great that he was quite single-minded in his expression of horror.

"You don't know what you're doing, Maxie," he said earnestly. "If you bring

Digitized by Google

these men in from outside there'll be bloodshed in the streets."

"Oh, you're an alarmist," she said lightly. "And anyhow I didn't anticipate bringing them in except as a last resort."

"The last resort is nearer than you think," he grunted. "If I know anything about Carados there are bitter days ahead of it and of all of us."

There was nothing more to be said. She rose from her chair with a laugh.

"I quite understand your point-of-view in the matter," she said. "But it's my capacity against yours, my will against yours if it comes to that. It's always been the same since we were children."

The tone of challenging militancy had come again into her voice, and the look in her eyes made the blood pulse hotly through his arteries. He could not help admiring her as she stood there matching her power against his own. Somehow she roused something primitive within him, the longing to conquer and subdue, the feeling that the first man felt when the woman at his side issued a challenge to his courage and masculinity.

But the chief memory that hung before his brain as he made his way out into the street was that of a portrait that had hung above her desk, the portrait of a brown-legged boy and a dark-haired girl playing on the sand of a white beach.

It followed him as he took a taxi and spun through quiet streets toward the glitter of the Great White Way. It was not odd, perhaps, that she had preserved that record of their youth; but what meaning did it hold for her? He could not imagine her clinging with any sort of tenacity to the sentimental associations of a day that was long dead.

Her whole mind seemed to be centered on the present moment, and her whole pleasure seemed to be derived from the clash of conflict. As he stared out unseeingly at the unlighted shop-fronts he felt that if he was to retain her respect and his own pride he could not allow her an easy triumph now.

Where the theater crowds were pouring out in streams the taxi was held up for a moment and the dance and glitter of fierce electric fire woke his sight. A small, dapper man was standing near the open door of a tobacconist's store not five yards away from him, his jeweled fingers holding a black cigar, and his dark eyes looking at the eddies of passing people as if they belonged to an incomprehensible and alien world. As the taxi leaped forward again Brent gave an involuntary exclamation of surprise.

"Lopez!" he muttered. "What the devil is he doing here?"

CHAPTER VIII

THE MISSION OF LOPEZ

BUT the mission of José Lopez to New York was no less important than Brent's own. He was the trusted agent of a small group of men who for years had been plotting against the Government in power, and he was the only one of them who had any real experience of the outside world.

This small, implacable man who had twice served under Ramiro in a foreign embassy was the brains and directing energy of the little band of very timorous rebels who met secretly at the Esperanza Club in Carados and argued about the exact point at which it would be safe to proclaim their adherence to Ramiro.

Most of them were merchants or officials who had been slighted in the past or expected favors in the future, fattish, indolent men with very little taste for risk and adventure, and they lived in deadly fear lest they should move too soon or too late. The uncertain factor was always the populace.

For some time they had been striving to imbue them with the idea that the Government in power was bleeding them for the benefit of foreign concession-hunters, but while the average peon accepted this as a bitter truth he regarded the Carados Concession and its *Señor Administrador* with affection.

There were foreigners coming in to pick the eyes out of the country. True. But the Carados Concession was different. It had not brought *gringos* in to supplant them. All the work, even to the driving of the engines on the new railroad, was done by men of their own race.

From the beginning Lopez had seen that any attack on Brent was doomed to failure from the start. It was dangerous to antagonize Brent; he must be won. The populace could be left out of account for they would move in whatever direction the King of Carados wished them to move. Lopez was one of the few men in Carados who understood Brent's relation to the Concession,

Digitized by Google

indeed, he was one of the few men capable of appreciating Brent's devotion to an idea, even if they had known the facts.

His dark eyes, quick to observe things and reflect on their significance, had watched the movements of Maxie Ritter, agent of the Lightning Trust, from the day she had landed in Carados; till in the end he had become convinced that there were movements going on that might ultimately be favorable to his cause.

The departure of Brent to New York and a few chance words that Swasey had dropped had finally stimulated him to action. That night when his group met at the Esperanza Club he faced them contemptuously.

"Señores, you talk and talk," he said. "You speak as if your declaration in supprt of Ramiro were all that is needed for victory. But what real claims will you have upon his gratitude when he comes into his own? That you turned at the right moment?

"Every official in the country will be able to say the same. Five hundred rifles now would have more value than the talk of a million men. If the populace decided for Ramiro tomorrow what effect would their sympathy have unless they were armed?"

The group of intriguers shrugged their shoulders and looked at one another.

"That is all very well," said one old merchant from the Plaza. "But the Government has taken good care that there is not a rifle to be procured from one end of the republic to the other."

Lopez answered swiftly.

"Who would think of looking for them there? Raise the money, señores, and I will have them here within three weeks."

But it was not merely for the purpose of obtaining small arms that he had set out for New York, traveling with all speed by horse, rail, and steamer. His aim had been to try to discover what was happening to the Jardine Concession. On the evening Brent had seen him standing by the tobacconist's window he had successfully negotiated an interview with Jardine in the guise of a representative of a European syndicate and had gained most of the information he wanted.

It was information, however, that could have been acquired just as easily by remaining at home, for at the time he had been engaged in making spurious offers to Jardine on behalf of the fictitious European syndicate the new manager of the Lightning Trust was already installed at Carados.

A WEEK later Brent, standing on the deck of the incoming steamer, looked shoreward toward a Carados in which he had no part or lot. It was all the same, the dark cone of the mountain rearing its head to the burnished sky, the huddle of white buildings at its foot, and the glimmering stretch of blue harbor, but leaning against the rails he thought he detected a subtle difference.

Perhaps it was only his pride, but it seemed like a machine that had lost its directing intelligence. There were fewer lighters at the wharves, fewer *cargadores* working about the harbor, but it was not in these things that the change lay. The whole place appeared to be waiting for something to happen.

It was from Swasey sitting puzzled, quizzical, half-apologetic in his office that he got his first glimpse of the real position of things.

"It was all so sudden," said the latter, shrugging his shoulders. "The new manager dropped in here even before I got your telegram telling that you had resigned your position. He's a smart man with a lot of push about him but he's got no more understanding of this country than a blind burro.

"Before he'd been here three days he'd got Ferguson on edge, and the workmen have been deserting in couples ever since. Some are going back to the *campo*, and others are making over the mountains to join Ramiro. The general outlook isn't what you'd call cheerful."

He looked at Brent as if inviting some sort of statement as to his attitude. In the back of his mind there was a slight feeling of resentment that his late chief had not thought fit to take him into his confidence, and he was curious as to what was going on in Brent's mind.

He knew better than most men the way the place had woven itself into the latter's fiber and formed the texture of all his thoughts and he could not see how the King of Carados, the idol of the populace, could regard his dethronement with complacency. But Brent's face was as impassive as if carved out of granite, and neither by look or word did he betray his attitude.

"And what about Ramiro?" he asked carelessly.

Digitized by Google

Swasey gave a grimace.

"He's had some small successes over the Government troops and he's gaining supporters every day. His aim is to get control of the roads leading from here to the capital, and if he does that all Carados will be on his side. They're waiting for something decisive to happen, I guess, but Ramiro has got a good bunch of active supporters working for him here."

"A handful of merchants," said Brent contemptuously. "They don't count for much either way. Lopez isn't here."

"He came back last night," said Swasey quickly. "Lord alone knows where he'd been. Some one said he'd done an overland journey to the Santa Maria railroad and caught a boat on the other coast. But wherever he's been I guess he was awake for most hours out of the twenty-four. He's that sort.

"The railroad engineers aren't happy about the state of things, and neither are the officials of the steamship company. It's the change of ownership that makes them feel sick. The name of the Lightning Trust doesn't smell good to any of them."

"H'm," said Brent. "Whatever happens it won't be their funeral."

He turned on his heel and went out across the plaza to the hotel, his mind busy with its own thoughts. But wherever he went there was no mistaking the change that had come over the people. Through his very senses he could feel that they were in an ugly mood.

The *pulperias* were fuller than ever before, and there were excited crowds arguing under the cottonwood trees at the edge of the plaza; *cargadores*, workers from the mine, and a few women. A few excited words from a dark-eyed speaker in a dirty white manta floated over to him as he stood in the porch of the hotel, hardly any one noticing his presence:

"This foreign trust has come to tread you in the dirt. Yes; there will be no more *fiestas* and no more drinking of *pulque*. If you do not strangle it in the beginning you are lost."

It echoed in Brent's ears all the afternoon as he strode up and down the balcony of the hotel, wondering how it was all going to end. Yet to him the struggle that was going on between Ramiro and the Government was a minor matter to the struggle that was going on between Maxie and himself, though they were part of the same thing. He knew that Maxie had not in the least grasped what his dethronement from the position of *Señor Administrador* would mean to the people of Carados.

In his own soul he was perfectly sure that if he were in charge of things there would not be a shadow of discontent or rebellion, in spite of all the intrigues of Lopez and his gang. The people would listen to him as they had done in the past, and would trouble very little as to who was President at the capital.

As he walked up and down the balcony in the cool dusk, visualizing very clearly the anarchy and chaos that the next few weeks were likely to bring forth, the thought of Maxie's offer came back to him. He did not want to see the mine-buildings go up in flame, the railroad track torn up, or a furious mob rioting down the street.

His strong pride in his own handiwork made him recoil with an almost physical dread from the thought of all that, and sapped at the foundations of his resolve. He paced up and down like a tiger in a cage, knowing in every fiber that in all Carados he was the only man who could stave off disaster now.

But surrender to Maxie? It was too great a humiliation to be faced without a flinch of shame passing through his blood. He could imagine her triumphant smile, and the mocking look in her eyes as she reminded him of all his heroics.

She would never understand why he had given in and it would be impossible to make her realize it; she would be intent on sucking every drop of joy out of the triumph. No, he would never give in to her, no matter what happened. It was only when she had cut her hands on the rough edge of things that she would learn he had been right.

"What's that noise by the harbor, Pedrito?" he asked a little later as the waiter brought a tray and glasses out to the balcony.

The waiter smiled myseriously and lowered his voice.

"A few men drill there by night, señor."

"What?" jerked out Brent.

"It is open knowledge, señor," said Pedrito imperturbably.

"And what have the authorities to say?" queried Brent.

Pedrito shrugged his shoulders with the

Digitized by Google

indifference of a man who was quite cynical about politics.

"They see what they want to see, señor," he replied.

He retired with his tray quietly, as if the matter was not one of great importance. But Brent, sitting still in his canvas chair and biting on the stem of his cold pipe knew that the die had been cast. Not all the dollars of the Lightning Trust could save the situation now.

CHAPTER IX

THE OFFER OF JOSÉ LOPEZ

THE news of Ramiro's successes came drifting over the mountains, carried by drivers of mule trains, contract laborers, and casual travelers, and becoming distorted out of all resemblance to truth in the process. The only newspaper in Carados was a ragged sheet produced weekly by a half-illiterate teacher, and secretly published by Lopez and his group. To the men who gathered in the *pulperias* and drinking-dens of an evening, it confirmed the rumors that floated about.

The reports were many and various. It was said that Ramiro was making a triumphant progress toward the capital, and hanging all who had not joined him by the way; again that a proclamation had been issued revoking all foreign concessions, again, that the people in the capital had risen and that the President had fled for his life.

From the conflicting evidence that floated in to him Brent found it hard to sort out the shreds of truth, yet it was plain that Ramiro was having considerable success; out of the handful of brigands, adventurers, and disappointed officials that had joined him in the beginning he had created something very like an army and had avoided a decisive conflict with the Government forces with no little ingenuity and military skill.

His aim was obviously to gain control of the roads which connected Carados and the little towns on the eastern coast with the capital, and it was there that the issue would be determined.

But there was one man who seemed blind to the storm that was brewing, and that was Davis, the temporary manager of the Concession. He went on his way with a blind indifference that was born either of confidence or ignorance, and Brent heard the clatter of his roan horse's shod hoofs on the cobbles every morning as he passed the hotel on his way to the mine.

"Fool!" he muttered, as he sat up to watch the sun rising in the harbor. "He'll be pulled up with a sudden jerk before long."

From the beginning they had avoided one another, though they exchanged brusk greetings when they met in the street or the Spanish Club. Brent could not help feeling a certain hostility to the man who had stepped into his shoes, and Davis, for his part, was filled with the cocksure haughtiness of youth.

The atmosphere of suspicion with which he was regarded by peons and townspeople alike, he laid to Brent's account, and it galled him when he heard the laborers speak of the King of Carados. He knew very little of the difficulty of the task he had undertaken, and his chief asset was a wholehearted confidence in his own power.

But things were not going well. He had been unpopular from the start with the shipping company and the engineers of the railroad, and though they rarely came into direct contact, the fact that he had not the support of the men of his own race reacted perceptibly on the impressionable peons. The crisis came one day when work suddenly ceased on the railroad, and gangs of idle men came streaming into town with money to burn.

"Well! what are you going to do now?" asked Brent, half-challengingly, half in concern.

Davis looked up and flicked the ash from his cigaret.

"What I intended to do in the beginning," he said coolly. "Bring in a crowd of dagoes to carry on the work."

The light way in which he spoke made the blood throb in Brent's temples. He felt that this man with the quick, uncertain eyes, the thin features, and the truculent manner had never looked at any but the obvious side of things since the day he was born. He probably knew all there was to be known about the details of his profession, but of men he knew nothing.

At that moment the concern which Brent felt for the place in which he had spent the best years of his life loomed up bigger than any thought of personal triumph. It was sheer insanity to send a man of Davis's caliber to a place like Carados.

"Man," he rapped out. "Do you know

Digitized by Google

what you're doing? You're dropping a live coal into a cargo of high explosives. You're lighting a blaze under your own property, the very property you were sent to look after. If those Italians land here now, there'll be blood shed in the streets, and you'll be the man who'll have to pay toll. The feeling here is just about at boiling point as it is."

Davis laughed jestingly.

"You take these little hole-in-the-corner rebellions too seriously," he said. "This one won't amount to as much as a Fourth of July celebration in a small town back home. These greasers are always ready to make trouble if you work them on a loose hitch, and the only way is to let them know you're at the end of the rope all the time. It doesn't matter to me whether Ramiro or some other brigand has the upper hand at the capital, I'm going to have it here. And what can they do anyway?"

Brent looked at him contemptuously.

"They can make a scrap heap out of the buildings of the Lightning Trust," he said swiftly, "and they can slit the throats of any one who tried to stand in their way."

"If they did," said Davis airily, "there'd be a gunboat in the offing before they could count six, ready to blow the town to pieces, or get compensation for the attack on American lives and property."

"H'm," grunted Brent. "That would give a lot of satisfaction to you or the Lightning Trust. And it's the worst kind of fool that sets fire to his own house, and then expects the American eagle to hitch him out of the top story by the slack of his pants."

There was irony and passion in his voice, and his big figure towered up over his companion, dwarfing him in more than a physical sense. Into Davis's thin face there came a flash of quick resentment.

"I don't see what it matters to you, Brent, anyway," he said. "You've done with the Concession, and it's done with you —and, anyway the first batch of Italians are on their way."

"By whose orders?" flashed Brent. "Yours, or Miss Ritter's?"

Davis stared at him insolently and turned on his heel.

"I must say that you've got more gall than's generally allowed round here, Brent," he said with a sneer, "but the lady will be down here in today's boat. If you want to burrow into any of the secrets of the Concession, you'd better ask her."

Brent stared at his retreating back and a withering phrase rose to his lips, but he checked it automatically. There was something in Davis's walk, in his whole attitude, that betrayed a childish vanity and called for nothing more than a silent contempt. It was as a child Brent regarded him, a child playing with a sharp-edged tool, and for the hundredth time he told himself that he had no cause to worry; that it was to his interest that the Lightning Trust should come to speedy disaster.

Maxie's triumph was likely to be less lasting than even he had expected, and the thought of the humiliation he had endured at her hands came to his rescue now and enabled him to face the situation with nonchalance. He lit a fresh cigar and sauntered jauntily out into the Plaza.

UNDER the cottonwood tree that shed a thin shade in front of the hotel a small, active man was walking up and down, with short restless steps. There was in his small frame a nervous energy that would not let him keep still, and his dark eyes moved around restlessly, as though the world were moving too slowly for them. Brent, passing through the entrance of the hotel, found him at his shoulder.

"Señor! I would like a word with you."

There was a cynical amusement in Brent's eyes as he turned round.

"As many as you like," he said indifferently. "There are chairs on the balcony upstairs. You made a quick journey back from New York, señor."

The hurried glance of surprise and animosity shot out from the dark eyes of José Lopez.

"Then you knew I was there?"

"I saw you," said Brent carelessly. "Though I could hardly believe my eyes at the time. You were out to break a record, I guess."

Lopez shrugged his shoulders.

"We live in days when events move swiftly," he said, "and men must keep pace with them."

Upstairs on the balcony he was restless and ill at ease, while Brent sprawled his full length on a canvas chair, and watched him with a flickering interest. It was as a cat that Lopez appeared to him, a cat on springs. The wrinkled olive face, the short, crisp hair tinged with gray, and the small mobile features all betrayed an immense

Digitized by Google

dynamic energy, and the fire that burned in his eyes showed that it was not greed or personal ambition that was his animating motive. It was the consuming flame that devours a man of his type when he believes he is working for a just cause.

"I've spoken to you of this before, señor," he began tentatively, "but things have changed since. They've changed with us and with you. It is now certain that General Ramiro will be successful, and you—you are no longer the *Señor Administrador*."

His eyes searched the big American's face, trying to read what lay behind the stolid impassivity.

"Well?" queried Brent laconically.

Lopez stood till for a moment.

"You must realize the position, señor," he said. "You have more to gain than before, and we have more to offer if you throw your lot in with us. Carados, as you must have seen, is on the point of revolt. The people have left off work on the railroad; they are deserting the mine day by day. It is not that they are inflamed with the ideals of the revolution or strong in support of the General, but they hate this foreign trust.

"You must hate it too, for is not another man *Señor Administrador* in your place. Why should you not throw your lot in with us? If the people knew tonight that you were on our side, the whole town would be in our hands tomorrow. Your name is still a power with them, señor."

The obvious sincerity that lay behind the flattery, punctured the walls of Brent's pride in spite of himself.

"And why should I concern myself whether Ramiro is successful or not?" he said challengingly. "What good would it bring me?"

Lopez saw the hesitation and fixed him with his eyes.

"You are interested in the Concession, are you not, señor?" he said.

"That's so," admitted Brent. "I've put the best work of my life into it."

"And, it's not with your consent that the Lightning Trust has taken possession of it?"

"That's as may be," said Brent, evasively. "It's theirs now, and all the talking in the world won't alter matters."

"It's theirs, as long as the present gang of thieves hold office," countered Lopez swiftly, "but many things happen in a week. The Government troops are falling back even now before the victorious advance of General Ramiro and his liberators."

The inference was plain in his words and his eyes. Brent merely smiled.

"You take too much for granted," he said. "I guess the Concession's as safe as if it were a quarter-section of freehold in Arizona. Ramiro or any one else couldn't dare to rob the Trust of its property."

"Indeed?" flashed Lopez, "and how was the Concession secured in the first place? By purchase or by bribery? You must know, señor. You were the chief party concerned in the negotiations with the Government."

Brent laughed.

"I'm not responsible for the political system of your country," he said. "It was secured in the only way it could be secured, and anyhow the Lightning Trust has got hold of it in a legal way."

"The people of this republic can get it back in a legal way," continued Lopez swiftly. "There are more ways of going about a matter than one, señor, as you better than most people understand. And the new Ramiro Government will have to consider the validity of a good many titles to concessions. It will be disposed to treat generously those who were sympathetic toward its cause in the beginning."

His words played about Brent tentatively, flattering, insinuating, cornering, yet keeping always in an atmosphere of vagueness. His mobile features tried to conceal beneath an artificial passivity the eagerness that was alive in his blood. Brent's eyes gathered a sudden concentration.

"Look here," he said, "I understand your position well enough, and you understand mine. And, I can estimate pretty well the value of your guarantees. What offer have you come to make definitely now?"

The sudden frankness in his words and his manner produced a similar response in his companion.

"This, señor," he said swiftly, "I propose that you should throw in your lot with us absolutely. I propose that you should use your influence now and your actions later on to assist the triumph of the liberating army. In return, I undertake to get a formal guarantee from General Ramiro that the Concession shall be yours, as soon as it is possible to take the necessary steps, señor. The choice is before you. It is for you to give an answer now."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

BRENT'S TEMPTATION

IT WAS a temptation to whatever was adventurous and ardent in Brent's blood. He had considered the alternative before, but hitherto it had been hazy and lacking in outline; now it was definite and concrete. The transfer of the Concession had relieved him of any feeling of responsibility, and he was free to fight for his own hand, free to struggle for what he considered his own by every human right.

And the challenge had been thrown down to him by Maxie herself. How could he refuse to take it up now that the time had come for action? It was using rather shady weapons, but after all the choice had not been his, and the fight had been forced upon him.

The only alternative was to sit still and watch chaos and confusion taking possession of Carados, for whether Ramiro was successful or not, Lopez and his revolutionary gang would make an effort to seize the mine, and the people would be behind them. There would be destruction of property and perhaps bloodshed, and unless he were on their side, he could not stave off disaster.

He stood up, the blood pulsing deliciously through his arteries. Essentially he was a man of action, and it was only in action that he could find an outlet for his energies, so that now all the instincts of his nature seemed to be urging him one way. But it was of Maxie that he thought first and always. It came to him that he could never hold up his head again or take pride in his own masculinity if he let her triumph now.

The means to success had been put into his hand, and he had never failed yet when he put his hand to a risky job. It was playing the adventurer, but after all, it was as an adventurer that he had come to Carados, and the stakes were high; the recovery of his prestige among the people and of Maxie's respect.

Lopez watched the indecision and eagerness flitting like shadows across his face, and knew better than to force the issue.

"Well, señor?" he said at last.

Brent yawned in affected indifference.

"It's a good enough offer," he said. "I'll think it over. Come to me again in a couple of days."

Lopez shrugged his shoulders.

"In a couple of days everything may be over."

"I guess not," said Brent. "And anyhow I don't swap horses in the dark—Hullo! there's the steamer in."

This seeming lack of interest in the important issues at stake brought a flash of resentment to the eyes of Lopez.

"Yes, señor," he said ironically, as he took his departure, "and on board is the new *administrador*, the señorita who has supplanted you in Carados."

But Brent hardly appeared to notice the sneer in his tone. He stood with his hands in his pockets looking at the steamer which had been hidden from sight by the cottonwood trees until it edged into the wharf where half of the male population of Carados were hanging about watching with indolent eyes.

In the vivid glare of the afternoon sun the whole place appeared to be affected with a curious lethargy, and it was almost inconceivable that dark passions and ambitions were brewing under the calm surface and waiting their opportunity to burst forth in violence. The whole place seemed to be dreaming, enchanted. Even the *pulperias* were empty, and the few *cargadores* employed on the lighters in the harbor moved about listlessly, or lay on coils of rope in the shade smoking cigarets.

Brent was wondering in his mind whether Maxie would be taken in by the superficial semblance of things. The appearance of quiet seemed to belie so utterly the obvious facts. There was no sign that work had ceased on the railroads, that the mine was deserted by half the working population, and that a fight to the death was impending on the hills between Carados and the capital.

He wished very heartily that Maxie had kept away till it was all over. Her presence complicated things, and though he was eager that she should realize to the full her inability to carry everything before her, the thought of her personal danger brought a strange tightening to his chest.

"It's nonsense, of course," he assured himself. "Whatever happens they would not dare to lay hands upon her. And anyway, she can't expect to play a man's game without taking a man's risk."

But that thought did not relieve him much. He watched the attitude of the peo-

Digitized by Google

ple on the pavement as she came driving up from the wharf to the hotel, and somehow it was not reassuring. To the men in dirty mantas who lounged about at the doors of the *pulperias*, this strange proud señorita leaning back in her carriage was the incarnation of the spirit of the foreign trust.

For the last few days the whole place had been talking about her, wildly and with some bitterness, for it seemed a double indignity that the person who had usurped the *Señor Administrador's* place, should be both a foreigner and a woman. They glowered at her and spat as she passed.

To tell the truth, the daughter of the Lightning Trust's president, the new *Señorita Administrador* of Carados, did not appear to notice their attitude. She leaned back in her carriage with the air of a woman of the world, and cast rather contemptuous glances at the people in the street.

One of the people on whom her eyes rested for a moment was José Lopez, who was sauntering back from his interview with Brent, a cigaret between his fingers and a perplexed look on his face. Once during her previous visit to Carados he had been formally introduced, and at her nod, he swept off his hat with an extravagant gesture of mock courtesy. When the rickety carriage had passed on, he stood by the curb and his eyes followed it reflectively.

"These *señorita Americanas!*" he thought. "They're harder to understand than the men."

But it was not only Maxie Ritter's mind that he failed to understand; it was the whole mystery surrounding the transfer of the Concession. Brent had been badly treated he was convinced, and yet the big American had not leaped at the opportunity of revenge. He was not quite sure of Brent, and the uncertainty made him uneasy.

With Brent's help he felt that he could accomplish anything, for he had a childish faith in the initiative, energy and resource, that had inevitably marked the latter out to be a leader of men. The time had come for action, and he himself was less a man of action than a dreamer, an intriguer, a puller of strings.

DARK doubts gripped Lopez as he walked along toward the Spanish Club. He had staked everything on the success of this revolution, and his connection with it was openly known to every Government agent, so that if it failed he would be a marked man, and his life would not be worth a silver dollar. Yet he felt bitterly that he had no one to rely on now.

The crowd of fat merchants who gathered round him were secretly shaking in their shoes; the officials would take no step until the success of the revolution was assured. And, though it was easy to inflame the population against a foreign trust, they had no particular ill will against the Government and no strong inclination to take up arms. All but a small handful of them regarded the crisis as a good opportunity for a passive strike, with a little drinking and gambling at *monte* or *chusas*.

And Ramiro himself, he was not even sure of him. The reports that had come in of his advance were promising enough, but as yet he had had no serious opposition. His followers were mostly ragged peons from the *campo*, badly armed and disciplined, and the first reverse would mean a rout.

Moreover Ramiro was a boaster and a drunkard. A good bottle of wine would seduce him even when delay meant inevitable disaster. Lopez felt at that moment that he had put all his hopes on a house built on shifting sand. A black mood of pessimism had settled on him by the time he had entered the Esperanza Club.

"Well?" said De Maetzu, an official of the Customs House, who was his chief supporter.

Lopez made a gesture of disgust.

"Nothing is well," he said, sitting down on a chair and wiping his forehead. "He asks for time to consider, and there is no time to spare. Any moment we may get word through that General Ramiro is defeated and that everything is lost. I am surrounded by men who have no word but tomorrow for any proposal that is made. They will not risk anything until victory is assured. As for Señor Brent the only way one can appeal to him is by flattering his pride. He wishes to remain King of Carados, and the Concession is the price we must pay for his support."

De Maetzu smiled. A strong powerful man, with bony features and a predatory nose, he was less aggressive in his deeds than his words. He too was disinclined to act until it could be plainly seen how events were shaping themselves.

"It is easy to promise that," he said, with

Digitized by Google

a shrug. "It would be of no value to any one but him."

"Of course one can promise," snapped Lopez. "But Señor Brent is no fool. He bargains hard like all these Americans, and one must have guarantees of success."

"The rifles are already here," said De Maetzu quickly. "They are our best guarantees of success."

Lopez looked up quickly, revived by the thought of action.

"Good!" he muttered. "They must be in the hands of the troops tonight. It was the want of them that made it so hard to get recruits."

"There was a ship reported off the heads this afternoon," added De Maetzu. "Without doubt it was the one that carries the Italians. It will probably be off in the harbor till tomorrow evening, and they will be brought ashore by tonight. These *gringos* are too clever to land them in the daytime."

Lopez rose and walked up and down the room, his head thrust forward and downward.

"They must never be allowed to land," he said emphatically. "That is a question on which the people are at one with us. Make the matter one of resisting the intrusion of these *gringo* workmen, and they will rally to our side at once. Give each man a rifle and henceforth he is a soldier in our army. There is no more need to ask for the assistance of Señor Brent or any one else. The whole battle is won. Carados is in our hands."

His mercurial temperament had surrendered to a change of mood that made him speak with the fervor and glow of one on the verge of accomplishment. But there was too much caution in his companion's nature to allow him to be carried off his feet.

"It would be little good to us if Ramiro were not successful," he said.

Lopez glanced at him contemptuously.

"Nothing will be any good to us unless he is successful," he rapped out. "We have placed a rope round our necks, you as well as I, and we may as well look at that fact with clear eyes. But this is the last chance for José Lopez, and before he dies many things will fall. I am not going to sneak off to a foreign country this time in the hold of a ship, or be dug out like a rat from the cellar near the Plaza. If Ramiro fails I shall march my men to the mine, and take possession of it.

"Then I shall defend Carados to the last, until every building is aflame and every smelter shattered."

He marched up and down speaking less to his companion than himself, his eyes aglow, his small figure still and rigid as a steel girder, the one resolute man among a crowd of time-servers. But at the bottom of his mind, secure from the changes of flickering moods, was the strong conviction that Ramiro could not fail.

CHAPTER XI

THE DECISION

BRENT awoke in the morning from troubled dreams, convinced that things had been happening while he slept. A memory of confused dream-pictures remained with him, ragged troops with rifles drilling on the shore front, shouting *vaqueros* in goatskin breeches galloping in to tell that Ramiro's army had been victorious, a cloud of smoke coming from burning buildings. They were blurred and indistinct, mixing themselves up inextricably with the realities about him.

But running through them all had been a memory of Maxie as he had known her as a girl, tumble-haired, challenging, taunting him for his inaction. It was strange, he reflected, how fully she had mixed herself up with his waking and sleeping life during the last few days, stirring vague emotions up from the depths of his nature.

He rose and looked out of the window, the thought that she was at that moment in Carados afflicting him somehow with a sense of incongruity. The dream-Maxie who had the power of affecting him emotionally belonged so utterly to another world. In this one, the world about him, she was nothing but the force that had overthrown him and left him a casual adventurer, bereft of everything that had given meaning to his life.

The memory of her as he had seen her last in her rooms at New York roused nothing but a strong masculine desire to dominate, to give her unmistakable evidence of his power. The resolution in her steel-gray eyes and pointed chin met his own like a crossed blade and acted as a goal to his will.

And there came to his mind the definite

Digitized by Google

offer that Lopez had made to him the day before. It attracted him and repelled him at the same time. Beside the pride he had felt in the mine, there was the human vanity that made the trust of the populace seem like meat and drink to him. He saw himself riding at the head of a company of *vaqueros* and the people strewing flowers in his path amid a shouting of "Vivas" in the way he had seen them welcome General Ramiro nine years before.

He imagined Maxie looking down at his triumphant progress from the window of her hotel, crushed, defeated in her hopes, ready to acknowledge that mere money-power was a small thing beside the prestige he had won. He was almost physically conscious of the new look there would be in her eyes when they met his own.

But all these reasons for throwing his lot in with Lopez and the revolutionists received their stimulus solely from the imagination. They appealed to his heated blood rather than to his cool brain. After all he had always stood for law and order, and it was only in such conditions that the Concession could thrive.

Somehow the welfare of the Concession was the chief thought with him, even when the direction of it had been filched from him, and deep within him he had a moral aversion to joining forces with Ramiro and his gang. They were not men of his kind, and except for Lopez had little regard for anything but plunder and power.

"And yet," he reflected, "I've no call to throw mud at them. I'm out to win my little battle at all costs too."

He stretched himself and yawned, determining to make no decision until he had seen Maxie once again. It was her attitude that would resolve the issue.

"Any news, Pedrito," he asked a little later in the corridor.

The impassive waiter gave a smile.

"No news, señor, only rumors. The telegraph wires between here and the capital have been cut for twenty-four hours."

"Cut? By whom?"

"*Quien sabe?* By Ramiro, I should think?"

"H'm," muttered Brent," I thought that was happening. There seems to be a stir in the town."

"*Si*, señor. Today is a *fiesta*."

Brent had forgotten that fact, but it was evident to him when he went out into the street. On the further side of the wharves there was a strip of bare ground where a few beggars generally sat sunning themselves, or gambling with greasy cards in the ragged shade of the cottonwood trees. Today it was pulsating with life. Many booths made of green boughs had been hastily erected, and in them squatted Indian women vending *cana* and *dulces*, or fruit or cigars.

From a huge canvas tent came the sharp staccato of guitars, and though it was only noon there was a sound of dancing feet and the laughter of dancing men and women, while crowds of half-grown boys and girls hung about the doors quarreling lightheartedly and eating ripe *cana*. The *mate* flowed freely, and old women with soft, dulcet voices offered gourds of it to the country people fresh from the camps, who stood staring with sheepish eyes at the reveling in which they were half-afraid to join.

Brent stood staring too, the evidences of light mirth and happy abandon before his eyes almost making him forget that even then a fierce battle was being fought seventy miles away, and that before night there might be wrecking mobs pouring through the Plaza. The barbarous menacing note of the *gombo* breaking through the tinkling guitars was the only thing that recalled the dark passions slumbering beneath the surface, but the men he saw dancing and drinking in the booths were nearly all workers from the railroad and the mine.

They saluted him obsequiously from afar and stared at him curiously, and standing there a little apart from the crowd he was conscious that they still regarded him as King of Carados. It gave him a thrill of pride and tightened the fibers of his resolution. A ragged *mozo* in a torn *poncho* shuffled up to him and whined pleadingly:

"Señor, a coin for the love of Heaven. While you were *administrador* we never lacked money for a *fiesta*. But this new foreigner——"

He spat over his shoulder and turned hungry appealing eyes toward Brent. The latter flung him a coin and walked on. About a mile out in the harbor a dirty yellow steamer was anchored, and as he sauntered up to Maxie's hotel he reflected that this must be the boat that was bringing the Italian workmen.

The quick knowledge was pressed in upon him that if they landed them where the

Digitized by Google

men had gathered together for the *fiesta* there would be bloodshed on the wharves. Davis would not understand that, and neither would Maxie. With the ghastly possibilities of the situation staring him in the face he cursed the frivolity that had brought her then to a world of men.

BUT when he found her lolling on the veranda of the Casa Blanca Hotel there was no hint of frivolity in her face and she seemed to realize the situation quite as fully as he. Her brown eyes looking up at him from under her sun-hat were a little more serious than usual, and her face showed signs of tenseness, but the lines of her mouth and chin were as resolute as ever. Something relenting and soft that awoke in Brent's blood when his eyes rested on hers made him speak with redoubled truculence.

"You'd better have kept away," he began. "Carados is no place for a woman just now."

She linked her hands behind the back of her head and stared at him quizzically.

"I half-expected you to adopt that tone," she said. "You can never forget for one moment of the day that you are masculine. And yet the events of the last few weeks should have taught you that I can look after myself."

"The events of the last few weeks have been nothing," he said grimly. "All the trouble's to come."

"When it does come I shall be ready for it," she said with careless *sang-froid*.

The poise and assurance of her manner created the same feeling of baffled annoyance in him as before, and the toe of her small pointed shoe tapped the floor imitatingly.

"I don't think you'd ever understand the nature of it until it's upon you," he said. "Things are about as black as they can be, and though it's no business of mine I may as well warn you, Maxie. Those men of yours aren't just on strike for a few days. They'd wreck the plant and the railroad and everything before they'd go back.

"It was easy for you to get control of the Concession, and you managed that part of the business with feminine adroitness, but neither you nor Davis, nor any one you're likely to send can work it now you've got it. I wasn't boasting when I said the whole thing rested on my shoulders; it was the solid truth.—Those men won't work for any one but me."

"Perhaps it's just as well," she said quietly. "I've had to dispense with a good many of them, anyhow."

"Indeed? Why?"

"I told you the reasons," she said lightly. "There are Italians waiting to take their places. I don't like people that can't be depended upon."

His face flushed.

"If you're wise, Maxie," he said, "you'll pack those Italians back to where they came from right away. The people here are in no mood to stand that kind of joke. The first one of them that lands will get his chest cut open by a machete, and after that the whole town will run amuck. It will be the end of the Lightning Trust and all its ways and works.

"You're rather a scare-monger," she said. "But you've called wolf once too often. They're all landed."

"What!" he rapped out.

"They were all landed last night," she went on imperturbably. "They're out at the mine by now. I'm not quite as simple as you imagine. I know how to do a thing without unnecessary fuss."

The incarnation of modern feminism leant back in her chair and looked at him amusedly from underneath her heavy lashes. Never had Brent found her as dazzling and utterly wonderful before. And there was a new softness about her too, as though she recognized that the very completeness of her triumph allowed her to be generous.

She had more than a hint of that dream-Maxie who had sent him wandering as a boy, and who had still prowess to stir his emotions when he was off his guard. He was distressingly conscious of the curve of her throat and the way the hair curled back from her forehead. . . .

"And what are you going to do now?" he demanded abruptly.

"I'm going to live out at the mine the way you used to do," she said lightly. "I'm going out with Davis tonight. It won't take me long to get the hang of things, and in a month everything will be going with a swing again."

"Sheer optimism," he muttered. "The revolution——"

"Is nothing more than a bubble," she broke in. "I know these people. They leave off work and talk and drink, and in a

Digitized by Google

few days are ready to begin work again. Their ideas of revolt are like smoke, and there's not a man in the town capable of making anything but a rabble out of them."

"Yes," he said grimly. "I guess there's one anyway."

She looked at him quizzically, and then a smile twisted the corners of her lips.

"You won't admit you're beaten," she said. But that's sheer mulishness, Don. I've carried your defenses one after another, and there's no harm showing the white flag now. And my offer still holds good. Davis is going to take charge of the Trust's works at Maraco's in two months' time and his job will be open. You'd better swallow your pride and take it."

"No," he said with a jerky laugh. "I guess not."

"But why?"

"Because there won't be any such job in two months' time," he said, slowly. "The policy of the new Government will be a rescinding of all concessions. The Lightning Trust will be expropriated, with some compensation of course, but still expropriated. I am able to give you warning because you see I'm leader of the Revolution of Carados.

CHAPTER XII

THE CALL TO ARMS

FOR the first time there was genuine astonishment in her eyes, that deepened into something very like admiration. He was almost physically aware of the thrill that ran through her and arrested the steady beating of her blood.

"You?" she said incredulously.

"Why not?" he responded. "It was you who proclaimed war to the knife, wasn't it? Well, we've reached the point when I take the initiative, and the struggle's only beginning, Maxie. No, I'm not likely to show the white flag."

His attitude was that of reckless abandon, for he had made his decision on the spur of the moment and he felt that one of them would have to pay the cost. They stood facing one another as if at last they had touched reality. A pulse seemed to be beating in the girl's temples, and curiously enough at that moment Brent had a passionate longing to take her in his arms and press kisses on her protesting lips.

The issue between them was real and vivid, more clearly defined then than it had ever been before, but its very seriousness seemed to wake in him the knowledge that he loved her more deeply than he had ever done.

That was the overwhelming fact. The emotions that had been sleeping in his nature all these years came to full life again, and the realization brought a mist to his eyes and sent the blood throbbing through his arteries.

He was intensely aware of her proximity, intensely aware of the blue veins in her throat and the challenging defiance in her eyes. But the very force of his love made it impossible for him to accept defeat at her hands. More than ever he was determined to conquer, to exert the full limit of his strength.

"I didn't think you were so tough, Don," she acknowledged frankly, looking at him with a new light in her eyes. "You're tremendously worth fighting. But this time you're leading a forlorn hope."

"Oh no," he laughed jerkily. "You underrated my power here in the beginning you know. It was an error of judgment that a woman was peculiarly liable to make, and when all this is done I'll still be King of Carados.

The touch of her hands made him tingle when he took his leave, and he felt that something had been stirred in her also. For the first time for weeks he was conscious of being alive from head to toe, all confused thoughts being cleared from his brain, and his path mapped out ahead of him. He would see Lopez in the morning and give him his answer. His brain, his prestige, his power of leadership were all that the revolutionaries needed, and as soon as he took charge of things Carados and the Concession would be in his hands.

At that moment it seemed to him that Ramiro must be victorious in the very nature of things and that as far as Carados was concerned it would be a bloodless triumph. Then with the first part of the western coast in his hands he would be able to make his own terms with the victorious general.

He thought it all out as he lay awake that night, the din of shouting voices coming through the window from belated revelers making their way home from the *fiesta*. It was not the Concession he was fighting for now; it was Maxie. He could only win

Digitized by Google

her love through her respect, for of such mettle was she made that she could never regard him with anything but contempt if she defeated him.

His brain was awake and active, and his whole being was aflame with the wonder of her. She had roused passions he had thought were dead, emotions that had set his blood leaping like a boy's, and when he thought of her defiant eyes and the bewildering audacity of her he felt that he could break the world between his fingers if by doing so he could subdue her to his will.

Yet he knew that both of them were playing with fire. It was a perilous game, for the stakes were the lives of men, and neither of them could foresee the result. Brent, who had sucked the Southern sun into his blood, was oppressively conscious of the smoldering passions that lay behind the dark faces of the men he had seen that day at the *fiesta*, and he felt that his own power would avail little if the people concentrated their hatred of the Trust upon Maxie and the officials of the Concession.

He lay still, his brain trying to visualize the future, every nerve and fiber of him strung to a pitch of tensity.

How long he slept he did not know, but he found himself suddenly awake and listening. There were voices on the stairs, and the sound of candles being lit, some one stumbling heavily in the dark. He sprang up and went to the door.

"Who's there?"

An excited voice said:

"It's me Mr. Brent—Swasey."

"But what the devil?" began Brent.

"There's an attack on the mine," shouted Swasey. "The message has just come through. I half-expected it, and waited up most of the night in the office—Miss Ritter's out there and Davis is nearly off his head. It was he who told me to come to you."

Brent's brain was buzzing as he drew on his clothes, and for the moment action was quicker than thought.

"But who can be making the attack?" he demanded.

"Lopez, I guess," said Swasey swiftly. "His gang have been drilling a hundred men or so for a fortnight and now they've got rifles. I saw them marching off an hour or two before midnight, but didn't know where they were going. I sort of guessed Lopez had something on hand, though, when I saw him this afternoon."

They stumbled down the stairs into the dark and deserted street and a host of conflicting ideas were singing through Brent's brain. It came to him that only a few hours before he had decided to throw in his lot with Lopez and the revolutionists, and that he should be on their side now in the attack on the Concession.

Yet now that the test of action had come that idea seemed absurd and utterly atrocious. A vision of bloodshed and looting swept before his eyes and his one thought was for the safety of Maxie.

"Get a couple of horses," he said to Swasey.

"There are two, ready saddled in the hotel yard," responded the latter.

Brent's eyes swept across the Plaza to where a dim light was burning in the little post-office.

"Then rouse up the telegrapher," he said, "and get a message through to the railroad engineer at Rio Blanco. Tell them to get what men they have together and run down to the Concession in a light engine. The wires haven't been cut, have they?"

"Cut?" said Swasey. "No, they've been mended. The telegrapher has been taking messages all the evening from the capital. There's been a crowd round the door all evening waiting for news."

"News?"

"Yes," said Swasey. "The Government forces met Ramiro and his crowd yesterday morning at Barrios, and fairly cut them to pieces. That's what upset Lopez and his gang. The revolution's as dead as a doornail and the last news about Ramiro was that he was riding over the mountains for his life on a pack-mule."

CHAPTER XIII

THE ATTACK ON THE MINE

HALF an hour later Brent was passing through the outskirts of the town on a broken-winded sorrel that snorted painfully when it came to the foothills. The Concession was ten miles from the town, and already it was nearly dawn, the arriving light showed clearly on the tops of the trees and coloring the East with pale lemon.

Everything was still in the town below, and there was not a sound to break the silence, except for the occasional shout of a muleteer as he brought his *tropilla* of

Digitized by Google

mules down from the hills, riding behind them drowsily with his right leg crooked over the high pommel of his saddle.

But Brent's eyes were fixed on the road in front of him, and he took no heed of the wandering glances that followed his progress. His mind, leaping ahead, visualized all that was likely to happen, Lopez was a desperate man, and now that the future of his plans had been brought home to him, he would stop at nothing. He had evidently started out for the mine with his followers immediately he heard the news of Ramiro's defeat, whether for purposes of loot or revenge it was impossible to say.

It was the only hope that was left to him amid the débris of his crumbling plans. There was enough silver at the mine to tempt the ragged crowd that he got together, and moreover they shared his hatred of the Trust. That they were armed, Brent knew well enough, and no adequate plans would have been made for the defense of the mine.

Yet Maxie would not surrender it tamely, no matter what force was brought against her; that was as plain as the white road ahead of him. She would gather what men there were into the white buildings that held the strong room and defend it to the last. A fear of what was happening even then sent a chill through Brent's blood and made something flutter uneasily in his throat.

Lopez knew that his glowing future had burst like a painted bubble before his eyes, and would be nothing more than a wild beast setting out to rend and destroy. His own life was not worth a dollar's purchase and he would not respect the life of others. To get hold of the silver and hurry out of the country with it before the Government agents could lay him by the heels would be his only chance.

So utterly were Brent's thoughts occupied with Maxie's safety that he forgot the humiliation of his own defeat. It hardly occurred to him now that there could be two ways of regarding the situation.

The crisis had come to test him and it had found that his pride was a small thing beside his love. He spurred on through the raw dawn knowing in every fiber of him that he would tread every personal hope and ambition in the dust, if by so doing he could receive assurance that Maxie was safe.

"I've boasted of my power to her," he muttered through set lips, "and now's the time to show it. If Lopez hasn't mesmerized those men, and if it's not too late I'll win them over."

A burst of red flames through the trees brought a sudden tightening to the muscles of his chest and he saw that a house at the further end of the village was burning, but the long frame building with its low outhouses was intact. A posse of armed men sprang up from the side of the road and clutched his bridle, but at a word from him they shrank back.

After all he had not lost his prestige among them, and besides most of them had a dim feeling that he was on their side. Then a crackling like a tearing of coarse cloth sounded from the timber a little way ahead and told him the struggle had already begun.

To tell the truth it had been going on for nearly an hour. It had been José Lopez's plan to take the mine by surprise before any one was awake, and he had sent a detachment to enter the village from the rear, but a couple of newly arrived Italians had been placed on guard, and they gave the alarm.

The ragged soldiers had swept over them, looting and burning, but there had been time for Davis and the other officials to rush to the big white building that held the strong-room and storerooms and prepare a defense.

Yet from the very first it was Maxie Ritter who had taken charge of things. She had barricaded the doors and placed guards at the windows, issuing her orders with the swift sureness that never left her. Yet the self-confidence which made her so swift to act was more apparent than real. For the first time in her life she had been conscious of the presence of physical fear.

There was in her mind the certain knowledge that the few men in the building had no hope of holding out against the swarm of infuriated revolutionists, and in the last test she found that she was a woman, with a woman's dread of brute force, and a woman's impulse to rely on the men about her. The crackle of ragged volleys from the undergrowth and the rattle of splintered glass as the windows were shivered in fragments brought an unsteadiness to her knees and she crouched at a loophole with set lips staring out into the raw dawn.

Digitized by Google

Brent was a hundred yards away before she saw him, and as he reined up his sweating sorrel at the edge of the undergrowth there seemed to devolve upon his big figure a tremendous majesty and power. The firing ceased. The scores of men crouching in the undergrowth with their rifles pointing to the white frame building hesitated with their fingers upon the trigger and looked at him wonderingly as if uncertain of the purpose that brought him among them. Lopez himself was puzzled as he drew himself to his feet and came forward.

"Señor," he said coldly. "You have made your decision too late."

Brent looked down at him and said crisply:

"Too late? It is you who are too late, Señor Lopez, what in the name of Heaven brought you and your men here?"

The small stiff figure of Lopez drew itself up to its full height, with an absurd pomposity.

"This is the revolutionist army of Carados," he said with blazing eyes. "If you wish to join it, señor, there is still time. But you must take your place in the ranks."

"Bosh," muttered Brent.

The ragged soldiers were crowding round him half-curious, half-threatening, and his instinct told him that Lopez had marched them out before the news of Ramiro's defeat became generally known. Wheeling his horse round he faced them, standing up in his stirrups and looking them squarely in the eyes.

"Men," he said in resonant Spanish, "I have to bring you the news that the revolution is all over. General Ramiro has been defeated by the Government forces and put to flight. He has abandoned his followers and is now making his way out of the country with all speed, and an amnesty has been issued for all rebels who lay down their arms at once. There is but one course open to you. Throw away your rifles and return to your homes."

There were hoarse cries of dissent, broken by exclamations of unbelief. Brent, looking at their turbulent faces saw that the possibility of Ramiro's defeat was too much for their brains to comprehend. Yet at the same time he knew that he held them by the power of his voice and his personality.

"It is the truth," he shouted, "I have lived among you for ten years. Have you ever known me to lie?"

"No," came instantly from a score of throats.

It was too much for Lopez. His eyes blazed with passion as he sprang forward and shoved his revolver in Brent's face.

"Traitor!" he hissed. "I might have known you intended to betray."

The shot made Brent reel and clutch at his pommel; but it was the beginning of the end. After all, to the crowd of peons, Brent was still King of Carados, the man whose probity had been tested a score of times and whose big figure appealed to their imaginations. In their emotional minds the act of Lopez awakened a very genuine horror. A score of them leaped upon him and struck him down.

CHAPTER XIV

FINIS

THE revolution was over in Carados. Most of the officials averted their eyes when they met and assured one another that it was an unfortunate outbreak, and that it was well that Carados had so little to do with it. After all Ramiro was a discredited old drunkard who had been disappointed in not getting more spoils after his success in putting down the previous revolution, and his military career had been marred by many scandals.

Carados with its important mining interests and its growing trade could not afford to associate itself with the schemes of such adventurers. Its hope for the future lay in settled government and the encouragement of foreign capital. As for José Lopez who was struck down by his own men when leading an attack on the mine, it was universally admitted even by the fat merchants of the Plaza that his death was a piece of good fortune.

"A dangerous fanatic, señor," they assured one another at the Esperanza Club. "He sacrificed everything to his own ambition. Carados would have had no peace while he lived."

From the whole-hearted enthusiasm with which everybody affirmed his faith in the victorious Government at the capital it seemed that the last flashes of unrest had died out at Carados. But among the populace there was still to be noticed a slight sullenness as if the things that had happened had made no great change in their minds.

Digitized by Google

The workmen had not gone back to the railroads and the presence of the Italians at the mine was still commented on angrily at street corners and in the *pulperias*. It was the atmosphere that often brooded over the town after a *fiesta*, and they seemed to be waiting for something to happen. The Lightning Trust was still the ruling power and the king had not come back into his own.

As a matter of fact, Brent just then was lying on a couch in a darkened room in the hotel with a bandaged head and an ugly wound in his neck, for José Lopez's shot had got home. They had brought him down from the mine in a mule-cart and a clumsy doctor had attended to him, but his face was pale and colorless as if most of the blood from it had flowed out from the gash below his jaw.

Though Maxie Ritter had been with him ever since the morning they had said little. The man had affected an air of detached irony and had laughed at himself, his wound, and every one concerned in the attack; the woman for the first time in her life had been shy and ill at ease. Both seemed to avoid the obvious realities of the situation as if there were things they would not put into words.

It was only when the light left and the dusk was dropping over the harbor that Maxie, who was looking through the window brought herself to speak.

"I've a confession to make, Don," she said.

He looked at her dim figure quizzically, with the air of a man who is on his guard.

"You?" he said.

"Yes," she admitted. "You thought I came down here on account of the Concession. I didn't; I knew all the time you were here."

"You did? Then why did you come?"

"Why does a woman do anything?" she said whimsically. "I started out with the object of bringing you to your knees. I was sore, smarting. You were always so independent, so self-satisfied, and you'd come down here and made a life of your own. I went into my father's business two years ago, so that later on I could beat you at your own game."

The revelation seemed to take away the man's breath, yet somehow he had known it all along—recognized it with his instinct if not with his brain.

"Well, you've just about done it, Maxie," he said dryly. "The Concession's yours and everything about it. I've had to show the white flag and I'm not going to whine now."

She turned on him with her face flushed and her eyes flaming.

"Nonsense," she said. "If any one's surrendered I have. I couldn't work that mine. I knew it as soon as I came down this second time and saw how everything was going to pieces and how they were all set against the Trust, but I stuck out because I wanted to beat you. That seemed the only thing that mattered."

He laughed jerkily.

"I've already admitted defeat," he said. "So you ought to feel triumphant."

"I don't," she said. "I feel that you've scored all along the line; more than that, I feel I owe you my life."

They looked at one another confessedly like children who have quarreled.

"I don't see what's to be done about it," said the man. "Neither of us seem to feel victorious."

"For my part I've stopped caring about that," said the girl.

"Well, then, the problem is what's to be done?"

The girl averted her eyes.

"My offer still stands, Don. Only I withdraw from my share in the control."

"That doesn't seem right," he said slowly. "I think we should compromise."

"Compromise? How?"

"Work it jointly."

She had sat down on the low stool beside his couch and seemed engrossed in the practical proposition. Somehow she appeared very small in the dusk, and very soft and feminine. All the rigidity had gone out of her face and the lines of her body.

"If you think I should be of any use," she began.

"I think you're the finest business woman in the two Americas," he said promptly. "But it wasn't that I meant."

"Those Italians would have to go," she said swiftly. "But that doesn't matter. The Trust could find work for them elsewhere, and I suppose if you were in charge the other workmen would come back."

"Maxie!"

His hand moving dimly in the dusk found her shoulder.

"And I haven't told you that the Conces-

Digitized by Google

sion doesn't altogether belong to the Trust," she went on. "It's my own property really. My father agreed to advance the money as my share of the patrimony."

Some sudden twinge of pride made the man withdraw his hand but the girl had risen to her knees.

"I want to have something to give, Don," she said with a jerky little laugh.

There was such frankness and simplicity in her tone that Brent's pride withered up within him. He drew her down toward him till his face was smothered in the dusky magic of her hair, and his body was vibrating to the touch of her lips. From outside came the noise of innumerable street sounds gradually drawing nearer until it swelled into a roar.

It was as if the idle crowds from the Plaza and the shore-front had gathered together and were swarming up the street. But the confused buzz had no menace in it; it swelled and subsided and swelled again till it became articulate in the sound of one name. The girl rose hurriedly from her knees.

"It's the crowd, Don," she said. "They're calling out for you. You'll have to show yourself at the window."

Brent gave a humorous shrug.

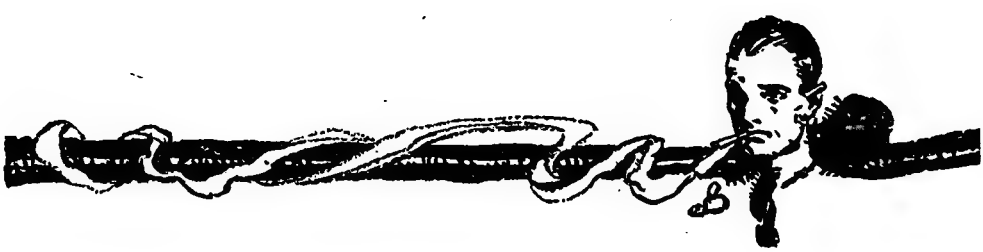
"My head's giddy," he said. "You'll have to give me an arm, Maxie."

It was thus that he faced them. In the dim light he saw a confused blotch of dark faces staring at him, the excited faces of *cargadores* from the wharf and workers from the mine and the railroad who had heard strange rumors in the *pulperias* and were eager to get an assurance from his lips that he would again assume control of the Concession.

"*Vive el Rey*," they called out.

"Men," said Brent. "It doesn't matter about me. But if you want to do any cheering here is the queen. From tomorrow everything will be as it was before, and together we will see that no stranger comes in to take the bread out of your mouths, and that not even the poorest workman will be in need of a silver dollar when the day of *fiesta* comes round."

For the moment they stared up in wonder. Then sensing rather than understanding that all was well, a simultaneous cheer went up from their throats, a cheer that might have been heard up at the mine itself where Davis was already packing his grip, and the surprised Italians preparing to go back to the waiting ship.



Digitized by Google

DARCY DESERTS

by Clyde B. Hough

NOW Darcy was a peaceable man. That is, more peaceable than an Irishman or a soldier is apt to be. But one afternoon, in barracks at Vigan, "Bully" Willets called him a name—a name that means fight—and when the Bully next found himself he found, also, that he was minus two front teeth.

The next morning at "office hours" Colonel Brady sentenced Darcy to pull weeds on the parade-ground with his bare hands for three days.

"I will not tolerate disorderly conduct in quarters," the colonel concluded and turned to his morning mail.

Darcy went back to his squad-room and to add to his humiliation learned that Willets had gone free; no charge having been made against him. Then Darcy, in his anger at the injustice of the whole affair, swore by all his Irish ancestors that he'd pull not a weed. But discipline is a mighty factor in the army, so when, half an hour later, the police sergeant told Darcy it was time to go to work he donned his brown fatigue uniform and went.

All morning the low-hanging, yellow sun seared his bent back and gripped at the base of his brain. His thoughts ran to mutiny. In his ears still rang the tantalizing chorus of snickers and chuckles that had been flung after him as he left the squad-room. At noon he avoided his roommates and ate at the guard-table, sullen, silent.

The afternoon heat was even greater than that of the morning and Darcy's grouch grew apace. His hands were sore and he was beginning to see red. In the squad-room, that night, he got all the "ragging" he had expected and bore it without visible resentment. He had done what he had sworn not to do and felt that he deserved the "ragging." Nevertheless it was hard to stand even for one evening.

Some time that night, flat on his stomach, Darcy wormed his way past the line of sentries. He took with him a belt, a revolver, one hundred rounds of ammunition and enough to eat for two days. Less than a mile from town, in an open field, he hid in the shed of an old cane mill, knowing that absolute safety lay in his very nearness to the barracks. Here he remained two days, waiting for any possible searching party to become discouraged and return to quarters.

About ten o'clock on the third night of his desertion, Darcy left the shed and started south. He was making his way slowly and carefully through tall grass along the bank of a great ravine not four hundred yards from an outpost where he had often done duty. Suddenly he stopped, tensed, and stood dead still. Had he heard some one move? He was not sure—not until it was too late—until something sailed out of the grass, lasso-fashion, and jerked him off his feet.

All he was sure of then, was that his mouth was full of hair. They had thrown

Digitized by Google

a dogskin over his head and face and drawn it tight. A half dozen or more hands laid hold of him from all sides. His belt and revolver were peeled off. His arms and legs were bound with rough grass-rope. Then they carried him into the jungle. He knew it was the jungle for he felt the branches slash his hands as the "gugus" ran. He did not know how far they went—it seemed like miles to him for he was slowly suffocating—before they dropped him to the ground and one of them hissed in his ear——

"*No hablar.*"

And as they untied the dogskin he felt the keen, cold edge of a bolo laid lightly against his jugular vein. Had he been of a mind to cry out, he needed no other warning. The sight of other butchered soldiers was still fresh in his memory and he had no inclination to have them practise their skill on him. He knew now that he was in the hands of Malavete's notorious *ladrones*. So he thanked God for the chance to breathe pure air again and lay quiet.

For two or three minutes an ape-looking Igorot, the leader, stood over him fondling a naked bolo that flashed and shimmered in the moonlight. And Darcy tried to think of a plan—some scheme—some trick to outwit those dog-eating pygmies, but his brain could not work, it was frozen with fear—not fear of death but hours of slow torture staked out on an ant-hill with his body gashed all over.

Then the ice in his brain melted and the idea came like a shock. Yell as loud as he could—that was the only thing to do. It would bring the bolo down on his throat and end the whole nasty business. A few moments before he had kept silent so they would not kill him then and there. But then he had not realized; now he had and he wanted just that.

He drew in his breath to yell, and as he did, the man with the bolo stooped and cut the rope that bound his legs. This action checked the cry on his lips. Why it did is hard to tell. Perhaps it was not the action. Perhaps—well, would they kill him if he did *hablar?* Or would it merely serve to bring the guard and a term in prison and, after that a "yellow discharge?" Anyway he of the bolo motioned Darcy to get to his feet and he did.

The gugus formed in single file with Darcy in the center and moved off through the dense jungle. The leader walked directly behind the prisoner with his drawn bolo threateningly near. And Darcy promised himself with each step that at the next he would take a chance and cry the alarm. But like tomorrow the next step never came and soon he heard the leader's bolo rattle home in its bamboo sheath. Then he knew they were out of hearing of the barracks and that he had lost his only hope of dying a white man's death.

As well as he could judge it was then about eleven o'clock, and they traveled the rest of the night without a halt. Their way lay over foot-wide trails, around steep mountainsides, down deep ravines and along the dry beds of rivers that would be raging torrents when the rainy season came on.

Darcy had been in the mountains and jungles most of his time in the Islands, and with his regiment had made some record-breaking hikes. But those wiry little devils with their skinny bow-legs and bare feet, could hike rings around anything he had ever seen. He was all in when they finished the trip with a two-hundred-foot climb and raised their heads above the brink of a straight-up-and-down cliff. It was just before sunup and there before them stood Malavete's *barrio*, ragged and dirty against the red-streaked eastern sky.

Usually things look cleaner and better in the early morning. It is then that a shabby frame house can be dreamed a castle, and a common yard-fence the castle walls. But no poet's fancy could have changed that huddle of *nipa* shacks. It stood out offensively on the clean mountain-top like a running sore on a beautiful face. And the stench of it was sickening.

But the gugus had not brought Darcy there to see the sights. They marched him straight through the *barrio* to Malavete's *casa*. And the whole gibbering breech-clouted tribe tumbled out of their shacks and followed behind. In his *casa* Malavete sat cross-legged on the bamboo floor and chewed betel-nut and smoked a cigaret. He looked at Darcy with cunning eyes that peered out from a face which might have been carved from the rough, brown bark of a dead oak tree. Then he raised a *vino*-palsied hand and spoke in the dialect of his tribe.

"Ah," he said, "the saints have sent a stranger amongst us. May the saints be praised."

Digitized by Google

Then to Darcy:

"The señor is a soldier. May we ask what is the señor's rank? Not that we would be impertinent, but that we may entertain the señor according to his station."

"*No sabe*," and Darcy shook his head.

Malavete knew that Darcy understood what he had said as well as Darcy knew that Malavete was making sport of him for amusement.

"It is unfortunate," he resumed, "that the señor does not understand our speech. Who knows? we might become congenial friends?"

There had been humor of a sort in the play-acting but, evidently, Malavete was tired of it now. He spit out his betel-nut viciously, threw away the burned-out cigaret and lit a fresh one. That meant business and he went straight to the point, though the same devil's politeness was still in evidence.

"Perhaps," he said, "there is a pack train coming up from Vigan soon. The señor would likely know when. Or better still, the señor may know the easiest and safest way to reach the stores at the big American barracks. And remember, señor, only the truth will count in these matters. If our people are ill-advised—well, the señor has probably heard of other soldiers who lived many hours longer than they wished. But if the señor gives honest and faithful information, the señor shall come to no harm—what say you, señor?"

FOR a few brief seconds Darcy hesitated. Then came the thought of old Jerry Darcy. Some two hundred years ago old Jerry had put in quite a little unpleasant time on the wheel, all because he refused to gossip with the English about matters concerning Ireland. And young Darcy said to himself:

"The Darcys of today can stand just as much as could the Darcys of two hundred years ago."

So he answered Malavete not at all, but stared, in silence, with the blankest look he could assume.

Malavete rose, walked to the back of the room and opening a door turned to Darcy.

"Will the señor look?"

It was a command in the guise of a question.

Darcy was led across the room to the open door. Three walls and a roof had been joined onto the main house. There was no floor and no windows. But, by the little light that drifted in through crevices he saw three white men lying on the bare ground. Except for an old shirt on each they were naked. And where spots of light fell on their bodies the skin showed chalky as though there was no blood underneath. The joints were the largest parts of their limbs. They made no move or sound and Darcy wondered if they were dead.

"They live," said Malavete divining the other's thought, "and yet they wish not to live. You Americans are a curious people. Why, we dare not leave a bolo or anything sharp in their reach,"—a silence and then—"come, señor, what say you?"

As before, Darcy gave no answer. Malavete understood the prisoner's silence and merely waved his men to take him away; and Darcy knew what that meant.

They took him into the dirty little center square of the *barrio*, lashed him to a coconut tree and went back to their chief. The women and children stood around gaping and giggling, but Darcy was too tired even to be annoyed by them, and soon fell into sleep or some sort of harassed unconsciousness. And when he awoke the sun was high in the eastern sky at frying heat. The gugus were driving two-forked posts in the ground about the length of a man apart.

This finished they laid a pole in the forks from one post to the other. Then they brought a clay pot filled with ashes, tied it to the pole so that it hung about four feet from the ground. Next they poured water on the ashes; and by the time the water soaked through and dripped from a small hole in the bottom of the pot, it was strong lye. When all was ready they staked Darcy out, face down, with the back of his neck under the drip.

Living God! He had expected the ant-hill, but not this. This was pure, raw hell—a torture to make men curse the mothers who bore them and the fathers who begot them.

Malavete had directed the proceedings, standing under his big sunshade which was held over him by two servants. But now he came near and bent over so that Darcy would be sure to hear.

"When the señor has discovered the easiest and safest way to reach the stores at the big American barracks, the lye will cease to drip. If the señor does not discover the

Digitized by Google

way, later we will remove the señor's shirt and let the lye drip on other parts of the señor's naked back."

With that he shambled away toward his *casa*, the servants carrying the big sunshade over him. The lye, accelerated by the sun, began to bite in. Darcy tried to move his head a little so that the drip would miss his neck, but it was no use. The stakes on either side held like a vise. Then he began to think of the "easiest and safest way."

Why not? What were the army or its affairs to him? The next instant he hated himself for the thought and remembered old Jerry. No! By the saints, he might be a deserter but never a traitor. Old Jerry had stood the gaff; and he had as much nerve as old Jerry any day.

The lye was dripping with monotonous regularity now, and the sun was driving each drop deeper and deeper. Once Darcy cried out with all the strength he had. But after that he took his tongue between his teeth and nearly bit the end of it off trying to keep it still. Minutes were eternities to him, though he had been there less than an hour when Malavete returned and asked:

"Has the señor discovered the way?"

Darcy made no answer and Malavete ordered his men to loosen the stakes and ropes, stand the prisoner up and take off his shirt. To do this, they cut the ropes that had bound his hands since the night before.

"Ah, señor," said Malavete, "is it not good to be unbound and free from the sting of the lye?"

The wily old devil motioned his men back and waited for his remark to sink in. But Darcy did not even hear. A little ivory cross that hung from Malavete's throat and rested on his bare chest had given the soldier an idea. He knew that the Quiangan Igorots feared and worshiped the cross and that their superstition was boundless. He had often seen them cringe in terror when some angry priest raised his cross with a threatening gesture.

With sudden swiftness Darcy opened the front of his shirt and pointed to his own chest where a large cross was tattooed. The gugus slunk back in abject fear, and crossed themselves fervently. Even Malavete was bowed to the ground and crossing himself like mad. It needed no prophet to know that this was Darcy's chance. He raised his hands as though calling down the special wrath of Heaven. The gugus groveled lower and the two servants dropped the sunshade.

This sunshade was about twice the size, and of the same shape as an ordinary umbrella. The cover was made of strong bamboo splits, wattled like a basket. It did not open and shut; the ribs were straight strips, tied at one end to the center-staff and tied at the other to the edge of the cover. But on the whole it looked strong enough to use as a parachute.

Darcy had never used a parachute, neither had he ever jumped from a cliff two hundred feet high. But he still felt the sting of raw lye on the back of his neck. So he took up the sunshade and walked deliberately to the brink of the cliff and jumped over. The thing held, he drifted slowly down and landed safely at the bottom.

He looked up and saw a score or more of black heads gaping down at him, their hands still busy with the crossing business. To them it was a feat that only a god could accomplish. And so as not to lose the prestige he had gained, Darcy stalked into the jungle with a dignified nonchalance that he did not feel.

Darcy was again free, with a much-blistered neck, and two courses open to him. At one end, court-martial, hard work, disgrace. At the other? But he did not even stop to make a decision. He simply turned his face toward Vigan and hiked.

A LITTLE past ten o'clock the next day, bare-headed and exhausted, scratched, torn and without a coat, Darcy staggered into Colonel Brady's office and panted out his story.

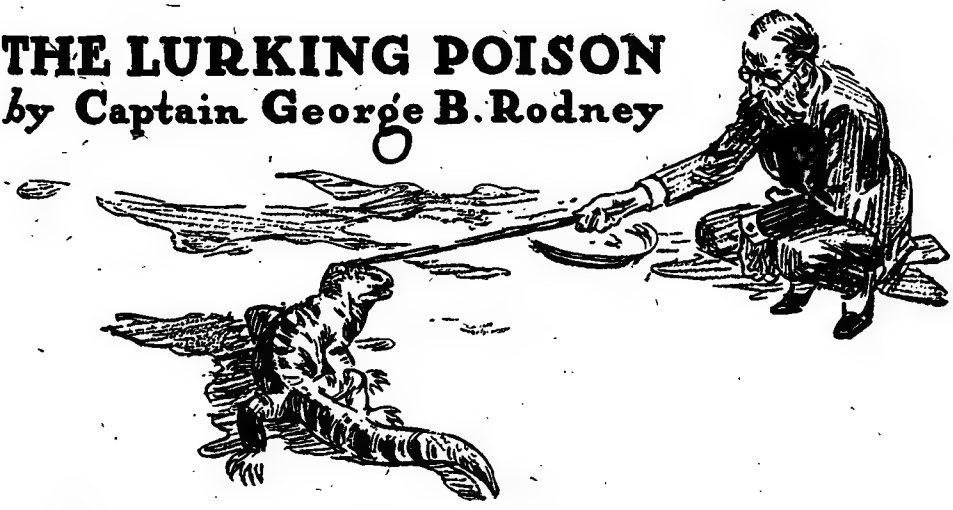
The colonel dispatched an orderly for a certain captain and sat looking at Darcy. The captain reported and was told to take a detachment and rescue three white men held at Malavete's *barrio*. The captain left at once to carry out his orders.

"Darcy," said the colonel, "you said you deserted? You're a —— liar Darcy. Report to your first sergeant for duty."

Digitized by Google

THE LURKING POISON

by Captain George B. Rodney



Author of "The Salters," "The Next to the Last Shot," etc.

WESTERN ARIZONA is rich in Pueblo ruins. That is why each year sees parties sent out from Eastern universities for purposes of exploration. Not every party can securethe services of John Wilkes as guide. He knows the country as a man knows his own dooryard and he is a perfect mine of information of fact and fiction, mingling the two to suit his own fancy.

The Arizona twilight drew down in fold on fold of gray and blue and royal purple shrouding the Eastern ranges. A higher peak or two picked out in rose-pink and warm gold stood out against an amethystine background. The evening star stood clear of a great bank of pink-flushed clouds and the cold night wind from its backing of the everlasting snows whispered among the aspens. Afar, a coyote scenting offal in the camp, yapped uncertainly in the middle distance. Closer there was a sound of burros grazing in the confines of the camp and once or twice a raucous oath floated up from the fire. It was a typical Arizona night.

"You-all better look out fer rattlers about here," commented Mr. Wilkes throwing an armful of wood by the fire. "I seen three a while ago. They're worse'n anything else we have down here barrin' Gila monsters an' you won't strike them fer fifty miles yet. Not till we hit the Lower Verde. They're plumb p'isonous o' course——"

"I've heard they're not," ventured a voice. "I heard that was all talk about them being poisonous."

"Yes an' I've heard of some people who says the ace is the low card in a pack," said Wilkes acidly. "There ain't no people who kin tell you exactly whether a Gila monster 's in poison earnest or whether he's just playin' with you—but the result's the same. The worst of him is that you can't tell how long the poison'll last. Drop it on a bit of glass an' it'll remain active fer a year and then if you rub your finger over it it'll take the hide plumb off. He's exactly like the story of the rattlesnake an' the boot. Know that don't you?"

Rich in experience gained in two weeks, no one asked the obvious question.

"What I mean is that if a Gila monster should bite a dog and that dog snaps you, you might as well be bit by the Gila monster in the beginnin'. It'd save you time. I know what I'm talkin' about fer I seen it—Yes I did too! It ain't a story I'm fond of thinkin' over. It raises too many things outen the past and they're the things that hurt—I've never told this story to mortal man before, an' I wouldn't tell it now on'y fer the fact that——"

The old man swallowed hard for a moment and walked out beyond the circle of the firelight and busied himself with the burros. When he came back a moment later he had regained his perfect self poise. He threw a fresh log on the fire, walked uneasily up and down for a moment as though

Digitized by Google

settling a doubt in his own mind and sat down:

"Know the Territory?" he demanded of Lawson.

Lawson shook his head.

The old guide began his story.

IT'S a big place. I was up in the Suppai country twenty years ago. It's away up to the Northwest you know near the Colorado Grande where the Grand Cañon begins. I was up there freightin' stuff in to the Indian Agency where they had about eight hundred Suppais teachin' 'em to lie an' steal the same as a white man. I remember I'd pulled into the agency when Watson, him that was agent in them days come over to my camp.

"Did you see anything of a wagon headin' in from the railroad? There should have been two women in it."

"Two women?" I repeats it like a kid at school.

"Yep. I got a letter a month ago tellin' me that the Secretary of Indian Affairs has sent a teacher out here—A Miss Forrest—She's comin' out with her mother—fer her health——"

"Whose health?"

"Her mother's o' course. I don't know what I'm goin' to do with 'em. You see we can't open up the school till we git a house. Even a lunger won't want to live in a Suppai wickiup. I'm sure up against it."

He was up against it worse still three days later when Norton got in with his freight, fer he brought 'em in along with some ten thousand pounds o' brown sand what they called sugar fer issue to the Injuns and a hundred bales o' blankets, each of 'em cut in two, so's to make two blankets—also fer issue to the Suppais—That's the way they done in them days.

I was down by the irrigation ditch when the wagon train come in an' I sure was interested to see what come out of it. First of all there was a little, gray, rat of a man, all beard an' nose an' glasses. Watson takes a look at him.

"That ain't on the bill o' lading," he says. "What do you make of it John?"

"Fine er super-fine. What shall be done with the owner?" I grins.

"Make him live in a Suppai wickiup fer a week an' cook his own grub—Ow," he says, "look yonder—gettin' out of the last wagon."

She was tall, a fine figure of a woman—of course we wasn't used to women in them days. You see that was '83—an' the on'y women we ever seen was now an' then the wife of some Army officer; dressed like they used to dress in the Civil War days—but fer anything I've saw, Miss Forrest had 'em all backed up against the ropes an' hollerin' fer help.

Tall she was, an' big an' fine an' strong. She wasn't pretty in the way that little women 're pretty but she looked good—if you know what I mean—an' her face was as good to look at as these here mirage lakes is good to look at when you've made a day's march across the alkali an' your lips is fair crackin' with the sting of it.

"We're here mother," she says turning to the wagon an' holdin' out her arms an' there was a note in her voice that made even ol' Jerry Watson take off his hat.

"I don't know what mother's like," he grunts, "but I'm here to state that she don't bed down in no Suppai wickiup while I've got a room fer myself an' all Arizona to make my bed-roll down in."

The girl fair lifted the little gray-haired woman down from the wagon, holdin' her like I'd hold a Bible er "Hawsehide" Smith there'd hold a bottle of Cow Puncher's Delight. While we was standin' lookin' at 'em, like a couple of mavericks starin' at a round-up, the little gray man comes up:

"My name is Minn, gentlemen," he says. "I've just come out with my friends Mrs. an' Miss Forrest to see that they gets started right," he says. "I'm Professor Minn——"

"Did you bring your table with you sir?" asks Watson polite like. "I fear we ain't got no place where you kin set it up——"

"Set it up? Table? I don't understand," he begins when I cuts him short by joggin' Jerry in the ribs with my elbow.

"Shorten your rope man," I says. "You're clean out o' the saddle that jump. Every man what's a professor don't run a gamblin' hell. Jerry never had no bringin' up."

"I am Professor of Toxi— toxi"—somethin' like that——

"Toxicology," suggested Lawson politely.

Aye—just so—"back at the College for Amelioratin' the Condition of the Eskimo, at Tampa, Florida," he says. "An' when I knew that my old friend Mrs. Forrest was coming to the wild West," he says

Digitized by Google

grinnin', "I come along with them to see that they're fixed properly."

Now it wasn't necessary fer him to tell me why he come. Just one look at Edna Forrest as she stood there and any jury would have acquitted a man fer bein' insane.

Well sir, we got 'em fixed that afternoon in a little shack that Watson had built of adobe an' brush back of his store an' two days later they was feelin' quite nicely thank you with old Four-Eyes, the poison expert, ridin' herd on 'em.

He was a nice little feller when you got to know him and what he didn't know about toads an' lizards an' snakes could ha' been writ on a piece o' cigaret paper. There was on'y one kind o' vermin he owned up to not knowin'. It come out one night. We was sittin' back of the house in the moonlight watchin' the moon as she come clear of the raffle an' swung up over the eastern edge of the Grand Cañon and amusin' ourselves listenin' to old Misses Forrest coughin' an' rattlin' away inside when old Four-Eyes says:

"There's one kind of lizard that you have out here that I have only seen in museums. I'm very anxious to git one," he says, "to study its manners an' customs an' that is the—the—" I forget the name. It was some French name but he meant the Gila monster.

LAWSON following Wilkes's story with intent interest grinned affably.

"I know," he interrupted. "Helo-derma suspectum—about two feet long and has yellow and brown rings on its tail. Poisonous as—as——"

"As a breath o' suspicion in a small town," grinned John Wilkes. "Right!"

Then he went on.

WELL sir, old Four-Eyes told me he was anxious to study the manners an' customs of the Gila monster. Watson he says to him:

"I kin tell you right now all you want to know about 'em; manners none an' customs nasty. You better leave 'em alone but if you want to go at it right, you better see Tony Betts."

"Who's Tony Betts?" asks the professor as quick as a flash.

"He's another one o' your kind," says Watson. "He come out here about six years ago an' he leased a big valley over beyond Yellow Horse Cañon an' he started in to raise merino goats. I guess he'd 'a done it too if it hadn't been fer the skunks, hydrophobia skunks, an' some kind of a vine that them goats insisted on eatin'. I heard him say it cost him eighteen thousand dollars to find out that a goat wasn't worth hell-room. Anyway he's been pickin' up a livin' over there by catchin' these same Gila monsters an' shippin' 'em to museums East and in Europe. I'll take you over there tomorrow."

He done it. They left at dawn and I tell you right now that some day Jerry Watson'll be held responsible fer what happened. Of course it wasn't in nature fer the old professor to be over there all the time. One day Betts he come to the agency and he seen Miss Edna an' after that the professor done his studyin' at home. Betts was at the agency all the time an' he was fair tied to Miss Edna's apron-strings when she wasn't teachin' them flea-bitten, little Suppai kids.

It was all right fer the professor to tell me that he was a friend of the old lady's but when he'd put down his note-book an' step round the corner of the house an' come on Tony Betts an' Miss Edna settin' real close in a barrel-stave hammock, he'd grin like a man grins when his best girl's little brother sticks a pin in him by way of a joke. He didn't see the p'int no-ways.

"Cheer up professor," says Watson one day when he stumbled on him layin' in the dust studyin' the belly-trail of a old he rattler. "Ain't you glad to know your friend Betts'll be over here to spend next Sunday?"

"My friend?" says the professor. "I do not mind tellin' you that I can live a long time without seein' my friend Mr. Betts without wearin' no mournin'," he says. "What's he comin' over here for?"

"To see about a lamb that he wants to get into his fold," says Jerry an' we both falls up against the corral fence laughin' while the professor stalks off lookin' like a little boy tryin' to walk like a man.

Betts come over on Sunday all right an' hung round Miss Edna closer'n ever an' the professor was on the job too. Fer politeness sake Miss Edna tried to introduce some subject they could both talk about an' finally as luck would have it she struck on p'ison reptiles. That was their time fer talkin'. Each of 'em swore he knew more

Digitized by Google

about it 'n any one else in the world and presently Miss Edna seein' she'd started somethin' that she couldn't stop, got up to go inside the shack an' get grub fer her mother.

They was at it hammer an' tongs when she left.

"I tell you you are wrong," says Betts. "The old Spaniards called it *el diablo de los muertos* showin' what they thought of it an'——"

"All pure prejudice of the ignorant," says the professor. "It is not deadly. The poison in it is deadly enough to kill or stupefy birds an' small animals but that's all——"

"Well you better not go near one of 'em then if that's so," says Betts losin' his temper. "I tell you, you little fool, the things are deadly—" I begun to listen close then an' I sure learned a lot about Gila monsters—"I've studied 'em fer three years," says Betts, "an' I know what I'm talkin' about. They lay around in the sandy bottoms of the flats an' lie in wait fer small animals and birds an' young prairie dogs when they kin git 'em and they kin sneak up on 'em an' bite 'em er spit the poison at 'em. Now mind you a Gila monster what ain't had nothin' to eat ain't deadly at all. Nor one that has just eaten ain't deadly—but when they're good an' ripe——"

"Ripe?" says the professor. "Ripe?"

"Yes ripe, I said ripe. They ain't got but one intestine an' they don't digest their food. It just lays in the stomach and decays an' when they're full of young lizards an' baby rattlers an' vinagerones with a half dozen tarantulas maybe fer dessert you kin figure out whether they make nice pets," he says.

The professor got up an' took off his hat.

"Mr. Betts," he says solemn like. "Are you jokin' me?"

"I am not," says Betts gettin' hot. "I don't joke on scientific matters," he says stiff like.

"Then, sir," says the professor growin' about three foot in air, "I wish to congratulate you, sir, on your careful an' methodical observations which do infinite credit to your patience. I beg your pardon," he says.

That won Betts over at once.

"If you'd like to see the truth of my statements," he says, "An' I really wish you would do so, I will take great pleasure in sendin' over here for your examination, a specimen that I have had under observation for some time. I extracted all his teeth about six months ago so I could examine him at my leisure without the danger of bein' bit but even now there is of course a little danger I suppose. I'm tryin' to collect enough of the poison to send to a chemist an' have it analyzed," he says. "It ought to be interestin'."

You might have thought he was offerin' the professor a chance to buy stock in the original Comstock Lode from the way he put it an' the professor grabbed at it like a baby does fer a gold watch.

"I'm goin' over to the ranch in the mornin' to look after my stock," says Betts. "I'll bring it back with me when I come."

He done it an' you kin just bet that me an' Watson was on hand when he got to the agency bringin' along with him a big box in the back of his wagon. It was near four foot square an' it was faced with wire nettin' an' had little air holes in the sides. They took it out to a square pen that the professor had spent his mornin' in buildin' outen boards an' wire an' brush an' they opened up the box an' Betts he poked around inside it with a stick till that old Gila monster came out like a shot outen a gun.

He was about two foot long with brownish-gray scales over his back an' a ridge of bony, black points down his spine. There was great yeller an' brown rings, like a rattler's colorin', across the base of his tail an' he had a kind of orange colored fringe along the under side of his upper jaw. Betts had pulled out all of his teeth but his eyes were fair blazin' he was that mad. An' the big bulge in his throat, like a new alligator-skin bag, lifted an' filled with his heavy breathin' like he was havin' a fit. He sure looked mean. I wouldn't have touched him—not even with Horsehide Smith's hand.

By that time Miss Edna had come out to where we was standin' an' she was lookin' at us an' of course Betts he had to start in showin' off. They always do—just can't help it when a girl's around.

"Do you remember what I told you about them bein' able to spit poison?" he says. "Wait, I'll show you how I know."

We sure watched some eager to see what was goin' to happen. He went to the wagon an' took out a pole about six foot

Digitized by Google

long. It was shaped like a hoe only the blade part of it was a piece of thick glass fastened on where the iron part would have been on a hoe. He took this glass hoe an' another stick that had a piece of yeller rag tied on the end of it an' he went to the pen and stuck the glass at the thing till it was about a foot from his nose.

The thing drawed itself up like it was plannin' to jump an' the big muscles in its throat worked up an' down. It breathed hard like a man does when he's been runnin' fast an' Betts sticks the yeller rag almost in its face an' all of a sudden-like, we seen a kind of a mist like light rain form on the glass only it was green in color.

"What's that?" I asks.

"That's the p'ison," says Betts quiet-like. "Now watch."

He wrapped a little piece of cotton about the end of a long thin stick an' wiped the p'ison off the glass an' broke the glass on his foot.

"I never keep a piece after it's been used once," he says. "I know that this p'ison'll remain active wherever it is fer six months an' I don't keer to take a chance. He was fed six weeks ago. Look here. This'll show you whether the Gila monster's p'isonous or not——"

He picked up a horned toad that was hoppin' about on the gravel an' he held the cotton under its nose.

That cotton didn't touch him. It didn't come within six inches of him but that pore little toad rolled over in Betts's hand an', you kin believe me or not as you please, but he was covered with a kind of a sweat. He was stone dead.

"There," Betts looked at the professor like a man does who has proved what he started in to prove. "Believe me now? You keep away from him when you mean business. Even without teeth he's dangerous. Come on Miss Edna; you promised to take a walk with me."

And the two of 'em sa'ntered off among the brown ocatilla an' the prickly pears, thinkin' they was havin' a good time.

The professor was that interested in his new pet that he never seemed to notice the pair of 'em.

He just laid down in the dirt an' poked an' stirred at that old lizard till we all got tired of watchin' him an' went back to the house. Watson had promised us a drink.

I'LL skip a couple of weeks in the tellin'. There wasn't much goin' on but things was just like a thunder-storm that works up an' up till finally she busts an' somebody gits hurt. Betts was sure neglectin' his ranch an' he like to wore out the bench outside Miss Edna's shack an' when he wasn't there, the professor was sure to be on the job.

One night I was settin' outside the house in the moonlight when Watson come up with a fool grin on his fat face. He had one arm around his own waist an' he was kissin' the back of his other hand.

"I seen 'em at it," he says chucklin' like a fool. "I seen 'em at it——"

"At what?" I says. "Who?"

"Professor Minn an' Miss Edna," he says. "If Betts'd seen 'em he'd tear old Four-Eyes into pieces so small that you could stuff him through a colander. I was down by the irrigatin' ditch washin' my face when they come out by the walnut tree an' I heard old Four-Eyes say—I kin repeat his very words an' I'm goin' to do it too—he was speakin' as soft as fresh adobe mud an' he says:

"'Edna,' he says, 'I've waited fer this chance fer a long while an' I must take it now,' he says, 'fer I must soon be goin' back to my work—as soon as I've completed my observations on that beast. I never had a good opportunity before owin' to your friend Mr. Betts——'

"'Oh don't speak of him,' she says. 'I can't bear him. He's been so insistent—I can't bear him——'

"At that old Four-Eyes lit up like a fire. 'Will you marry me Edna?' he says quiet-like. 'Of course I'm a lot older'n you are but I love you very dearly an' workin' together we can plan fer your dear mother an' keep her with us much longer than you can alone,' he says.

"She stands an' looks at him quiet an' contained fer a long time. It was that mention of her mother I b'leeve that done it. Presently she nods her head an' whispers 'yes' an' held out her hand an' the next minute him an' her was all mixed up—I reckon she stood it as long as she could 'cause she broke away from him a bit later—then I come on up here to tell you. What do you think about it John? Have you seen Betts anywhere about?"

"Betts? No," I says. "Is he over here? I ain't seen nor heard him."

Digitized by Google

"That's funny," says Watson. "I see his wagon comin' over the divide when I was goin' down to the ditch an' I supposed of course he'd be here when I got back. While I was standin' there watchin' Miss Edna an' Old Man on the Hunt fer a Wife I'd have sworn I seen Betts himself standin' over by the corral gate lookin' on too. That's what made me think it was so derned funny. When I came up I looked fer his wagon but it wasn't there. Hm! Imagination I reckon. I'll have to be keerful about what I eats if I see things like this. Let's liquor."

"Let's go over by the corral gate first," I says.

I had a kind of a suspicion that things wasn't quite right an' I was none too sure of Betts. I'd seen his kind before. He was the kind that if he owed you money, you didn't want to take a walk after quail with him—not just the two of you. Get me?

We went over to the gate. It opened right on the irrigatin' ditch so there was a lot of mud there, an' deep in the soft fresh mud I seen the prints of Betts's wagon wheels. I could tell 'em because on the agency we used only Government four-inch wheel tires, an' his was narrow.

"Well—he's been here," I says. "An' he seen the whole performance an' he'll be as pleasant to handle as a new hatched rattler—that bein' the ways of man crossed in love," I says. "If I was old Four-Eyes I'd look out. He'll sure be up to some devilment——"

"You're dead right, John," says Watson sudden-like. "I'm goin' to tell him all about it in the mornin'. There's most sure to be trouble."

It come sooner 'n we thought. Twice that night the stampin' of the cattle an' the horses in the corral woke me up. If it had been ten years earlier I'd have sworn it was Indians—you know horses an' mules kin smell an Indian a mile away and I kin almost do that myself.

I got up an' looked out but I seen nothin' so I went back to bed again. It seemed like I just naturally couldn't sleep so I got up with the sun, about four thirty, an' went out to wash my face. When I come back I seen the professor standin' by the pen where he kept that old lizard.

"Look," he says. "Observe, Mr. Wilkes. They're always sluggish in the early mornin'. Mr. Betts said he hasn't been fed fer six weeks. I'm aimin' to put him on a diet," he says, "to see if Betts is right about his food. If he is right, then by puttin' him on a strict regiment of non-poisonous food," he says, "we'd ought to eradicate the p'ison. He seems very quiet this mornin'."

With that he opens the pen an' walks up to within six feet of the Thing. It opened its sleepy eyes an' looked at him an' put its head on one side an' blinked again like a cat on a hearth rug.

"I'll sure give it a try on new food," says the professor. "I've got some oat-meal balls I made fer it," he says. "Open your mouth," he says tappin' it on the nose with a stick.

I guess he was too close to the Thing for it give a wriggle an' a quick twist an', before we either of us knowed what had happened it had the professor's hand in its mouth!

It gave a vicious snap an' jumped back an' I seen the professor standin' lookin' down at his hand. It was bleedin' in a dozen places!

"My God!" he says. "I'm bit! I'm bit I tell you——"

I couldn't believe what I seen then for that cussed Thing opened its mouth as it yawned again and I seen it had a whole mouthful of sharp white teeth—little teeth as sharp as needles.

"Get to the house! Quick with you," I hollered an' he chased off as quick as he could to get whiskey an' ammonia and permanganate of potash an' all the stuff that people kept in their houses fer snake-bite in them days.

I knowed in a minute how it had happened an' I went down to the corral again to prove it. There was three sets of wheel marks showin' where Betts had come in earlier in the evenin', when Watson seen him; where he went out again an' finally where he come back again in the early mornin' when he changed that lizard. I could tell that because we had a Greaser detailed to open the slide in the irrigatin' ditch at three o'clock in the mornin'. That always overflowed by the corral gate an' that was where the last set of wheel tracks was—showin' of course that that wagon came past there after three o'clock.

When I seen that I knowed just as well as if I'd seen it, that Betts, after seein' Professor Minn makin' love to Miss Edna, after he seen the girl in his arms, went

Digitized by Google

straight off home an' got another of them deadly things from his collection—this time it was one that had teeth. An' then he come back an' caught the one he'd given the professor an' turned the dangerous one loose in the pen—knowin' he'd do exactly what he did do.

Of course there wasn't no use from the start! He never had no chance. We sent over for Betts, feelin' sure that he wouldn't come—an' he didn't. He wasn't there! His place was empty.

In twenty minutes the professor's arm was swollen to the size of a watermelon. In an hour his lips were all blue an' Miss Edna come sobbin' to me on the porch an' says:

"Oh, Mr. Wilkes, he can't last! His heart's givin' way! He—oh! The agony he's sufferin'," she says. "Why in the name o' God can't he die quick?"

And then she just naturally broke down an' cried like a little child an' me pattin' her on the shoulder.

"We'll try rattlesnake-weed miss," I says. "I ain't got no faith in it but the Indians use it fer snake bite."

An' we did, only it was all dried out and it did no good. It took the professor all of four hours to die an' he done it like a man. At the last he drawed me to him an' he says fightin' fer breath with his teeth clenched:

"I'm goin' hard, Mr. Wilkes," he says, "but I ain't afraid to go. I know now how it happened—it wasn't no accident—it was Betts—you'll never prove it before a court! I could prove it," he says with a touch of his quiet humor at the last, "but I won't be there."

An' before we could even call Miss Edna, he turned his face to the wall, gave a kind of a shiver and went out.

I took Miss Edna to her mother and as I came out I seen Betts come drivin' into the yard. I says nothin' to show him I had any suspicions but I called out to him:

"Hello Betts! I wish you'd been here five hours ago. You could have helped us. We've had an awful thing happen."

And I told him all about the professor's gettin' bit. He gave a great start and broke into a run for the house.

"I must see him," he says. "I'm familiar with all the symptoms. You must be mistaken. The Thing had no teeth. How could it have bit him? It must have been somethin' else."

I follered him into the house and stood by him while he examined the body that Watson and an old Suppai squaw was preparin' fer burial. He went over it inch by inch, examin' lips an' eyes an' fingers. Presently he looks up at me:

"You're right in your guess," he says. "It was the poison of the Gila monster that killed him but I don't understand how it happened. Let's go out to the pen."

We went out to the pen where the professor kept the old devil, me watchin' Betts careful all the way, an' we stopped by the fence. That Thing was settin' in the sun, its bag-like throat risin' an' fallin' in the heat an' its eyes narrowed to little slits of what looked like red-hot metal. Betts took a long look at it and gave a big start.

"H——, Wilkes," he says scared like. "That ain't the one I gave him!"

"What?" I says, pretendin' to be surprised. "It must be."

"No it ain't. The one I gave Minn had some whitewash on its back. It got it when I was whitewashin' the pen at my place. Why look there! That——Thing's got a whole mouthful of teeth!"

"And how do you account for that?" asks Miss Edna comin' up behind him.

"Why good mornin' Miss Edna," he says. "I'm all broken up over this terrible accident—" and it did sound like he meant it—"the only way I can account for it is this: You know these lizards are much like rattlesnakes in some of their habits. For one thing they mate and live in pairs. The one that I gave the professor was one that I caught down by Dry Arroyo ten months ago. I've often seen another one down there but I could never catch it. This one here must be the mate of the one I gave the professor and it follered its mate here—an' that's the way the professor got bit——"

"But how did this one get in the pen? An' how did the one you gave the professor git away?" I asks stupid-like.

For answer, Betts pointed to a little hole under the fence. It wasn't near big enough fer the lizard to crawl out by but it was big enough fer an excuse—because we couldn't say it was impossible and I wasn't in no position to prove what I was certain of.

"Yes. That's where it got out," he says as if that settled it. "Well, there's nothin' we can do except to give him a Christian

Digitized by Google

burial. We'd better have the service at the house, if I may make a suggestion, and then bury him after dusk. It's too hot durin' the day."

We done it that way. There was just the four of us at the house for old Mrs. Forrest had one of her coughin' spells an' couldn't come. Miss Edna, as white as frosted steel, stood leanin' on my arm an' a couple of Suppai bucks was beatin' a snake-skin drum outside the house, for they was fond of old Minn, while Miss Edna read a prayer.

"Well," says Betts, when the last word had been said. "I got a long way to go. I'll be hittin' the trail. I'll hope to see you soon again Miss Edna. I feel pretty sick over this. I told Professor Minn that he'd have to be careful. Why, that poison'll lurk anywhere in anything for a year or more and then break out! Before I go I'd like to get my note-books that I loaned him. I gave them to him so he could copy my notes on the poison and I'd hate to lose them. They represent some five years of hard work. No objection to my gettin' them I suppose?"

Of course nobody objected. We knew the professor had 'em on a table by the head of his bed. Betts went inside the room. He sat down by the table and pulled the little pile of note-books to him. I seen him get up once or twice and then he walked toward the head of the bed where the body lay. Presently there come a quick, sudden cry—I can't tell you what it sounded like—but it seemed like it might have been the cry a man would make who seen his death jumpin' at his livin' throat without the power of avoidin' it.

It come again! That awful shrillin' cry that made the heart almost miss a beat or two and then stop forever. I made one leap for the door. Edna had fainted in her chair—for if ever one thing was like another, that shriek that Betts gave was like the one that Professor Minn gave when he had been bit.

I was the first to jump into the room, my hand on my gun, for that cry was a killin' cry. Betts was rollin' on the floor foamin' at the mouth, twistin' an' rackin' an' thrashin' about among the furniture. His lips were stiff with fright and there was a little lather gathered at the corners of his mouth.

"I've got mine," he says. "It's come, Wilkes! Send 'em out! Send 'em out, man!" My God, must I beg twice? Can't a man die alone? Send 'em out, I say."

I shoved them out an' shut the door.

"Now what is it?" I says. And I jumped for him to pick him up but he twisted outen my grip and wallered on the floor, this time under the coffin.

"I'm goin' now, thank God," he pants. "Don't you see I'm goin'? I'm bit—" An' he throwed back his head an' fair snapped at me. When I bent over him he was dead!

I looked him over careful but I couldn't see sign of any wound. Throat, hands, eyes, heart—there wasn't no mark on him from head to foot that I could see. Then somethin' made me look at his shoulder as I laid the poor body on the bed an' then I seen what had killed Tony Betts.

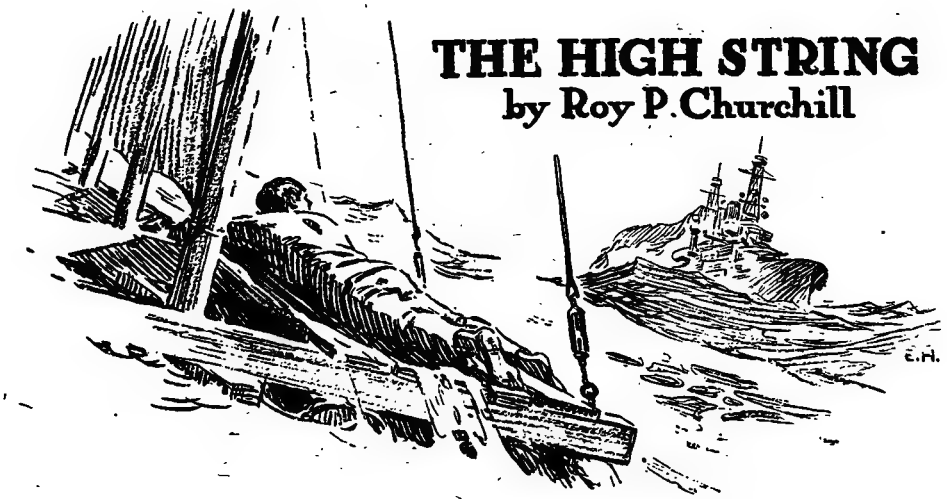
EVERY member of the party around the camp-fire, was leaning forward upon old Wilkes's words. Lawson, unable to stand the tension any longer spoke up:

"For Heaven's sake what was it? Give it a name. Was he scared to death? Overstrained heart? Guilty conscience? *What* was it?"

"I never said nothin' about this before," said Wilkes slowly. "You see, bad as he was the man paid fer his crime in killin' Adolphus Minn. He had gone to meet his Maker. I'll tell you now what I never before told to mortal man—an' that's the truth," he said reverently. "As plain as I see that burro yonder I seen, fixed firm in the shoulder of the dead body of Tony Betts—*the false teeth of old Professor Minn!*"

An awful silence fell broken only by the loud, raucous bray of a loose burro, voicing his unbelief.

Digitized by Google



THE HIGH STRING

by Roy P. Churchill

Author of "Another Cup Winner," "The Hunch"

SOME things that happen leave a trail of cause wide enough for a blind man to follow, and others hit you all of a sudden, like a brick off a chimney. Bud Cantrill, gun-pointer in the forward turret, was feeling fit and fine, on the rainy morning that the *Alabama* started to heave in her anchor for the trip to the target grounds. He manned the forward boat falls of the first steamer, and hove in the wet, slippery line with a skill born of long practise, and as he worked his mind was busy with the day's firing. He meant to hang up a record of which the ship could be proud.

The wet rope twisted and jerked, and clung to the iron drum, and Bud needed all his skill to manage it. On the other side of the deck at the after boat falls some one less skilful had volunteered for the job, and as the steamer left the water and the full weight came on the lines, the other man missed a hand hold, felt the rope slip viciously, and in a panic threw the turns off altogether. As the stern of the boat shot toward the water, the boatswain, watching the hoisting from the bridge, called shrilly on his pipe to let go forward. With one movement Bud Cantrill threw off the turns, and jumped aside.

By all the laws of chance, the rope should have missed him, but instead, a leaping coil struck him across the face, wrapped about him, and dragged him half across the deck. He was up in a moment, wiping the blood from his eyes, where the rope had burned a furrow across his forehead and nose. Those who saw the accident ran to him. His eyes were so full of blood that they had to help him below.

The whole ship's company was interested in Bud Cantrill, and most of all, they were interested in his eyes. Bud's eyes were to help win the fleet trophy that day. Danny Wallace, boatswain's mate of the division, brought the doctor's word up from the sick bay:

"He's out of it," he announced laconically. "Pills says he'll have to wear a bandage over both eyes for a week."

"Then it's good-by trophy for this year," commented Judson Allen.

Danny Wallace shook his head soberly, and climbed to his station on the bridge. Below on the busy decks the ship was being cleared for action as if nothing had happened. The shrill calls of Judson Allen's boatswain's whistle, the thump of the stanchions and boat davits being unshipped, and the shuffle of hurrying feet as the men first threw the ship into confusion, and then into an orderly bareness, came to his ears in a softened medley of activity, as he sat in the chart-room and rearranged things with Bud Cantrill out.

On every ship there is a dominant figure among the crew, and on the *Alabama* Danny Wallace managed the boat races,

Digitized by Google

planned the entertainments, and scouted for new gun-pointers to take the place of short-timers. Bud Cantrill's accident just at this time was a blow to him. As he sat on his sea chest with his back against the bulkhead, he ran first one hand and then the other through his thick, gray hair.

Somebody had to take Cantrill's place, and very soon now the captain would be wanting to know the best substitute. His decision made, he jumped to the deck, went outside and commenced to pace up and down the length of the bridge.

Danny Wallace was sixty years old, but to find it out on him you would have to catch him asleep and count the network of wrinkles around his mouth, note the thick veins on the back of his hands, and, lacking the witchery of his youthful eyes, get the secret, for Danny awake was Youth itself, in a wiry, age-tempered body.

He had made half a dozen turns on the narrow bridge before the captain's messenger found him, and a few minutes later he stood, flat cap in hand, before the captain's desk. Charlie Ehret, turret captain of the forward turret, waited a little to one side looking out a port.

"Who will we use in Cantrill's place?" the captain asked Danny.

"Lee Martin," answered the old quartermaster without hesitation.

"That's what Ehret says," said the captain, "and you two know better than anybody who it should be. We will use Martin. What I want to know, is why young Martin shows up so well with sub-caliber practise, and then goes to pieces when it comes to the real shooting. What about it, Ehret? What's the matter with him?"

"Nerves," said the turret captain. "The least little thing when there's a full charge in, upsets him. But since he's failed twice, I think he'll go steadier this time."

The captain turned quickly to Danny Wallace.

"Ehret's all right," affirmed Danny. "The boy needs steadyin', but with Cantrill out, there's nobody else quite so good. His eye is true and we'll have to play him, and keep him from blowin' up till he finishes the string."

The captain tapped his teeth with a lead pencil. "What is the cause behind this nervousness? Neither of you men seem to know."

"If you know yourself, sir," answered Danny Wallace, shrewdly, "it'd help us if you told us.'

"I don't," said the captain, smiling, "but it beats me why a perfectly normal young fellow, anxious to make good, training for months to point a gun, and getting wellnigh perfect in practise, has to fail when the test comes. I want you two men to treat Lee Martin like a father. Get close to him, look under the skin, and when the turret goes into action the two of you stay so close to him that he will hold fast and shoot straight."

"Does this mean permission to stay in the turret during practise?" asked Danny.

"Certainly," said the captain. "I'll notify the division officer. Do anything you please, but stiffen him up. The fleet trophy is ours if you can do it."

"The first thing," said Danny Wallace, as he and Ehret left the captain's cabin, "is to keep Martin from knowing too much about it until we put him in there to shoot."

"Good!" agreed Ehret. "I'll leave you to break the news to him whenever you think it's time."

The secondary battery practise commenced half an hour later, and the turret crews being also at their station, Danny Wallace crawled through the manhole into the forward turret to see how Lee Martin was standing the excitement. He found the youngster composedly looking out the gun port trying to trace the flying four-inch shells. Leaning over his shoulder Danny said in his ear:

"Good work so far. Kirk Carter has just finished a string, eight hits out of ten."

The boy recognized Danny's voice and turned to him.

"Who is going to point in here in place of Bud?"

Danny shrugged his shoulders.

"It's up to Ehret," he evaded.

"Ehret says it's up to you," said Martin.

"He did, did he? Well, come on up to the chart-room. This turret's not due to fire for a long time yet. I want to have a talk with you.'

A FEW minutes later Danny Wallace and the young gun-pointer faced each other from opposite sea-chests across the narrow room.

"What I want to know," said Danny Wallace, coming straight to the point, "is why you fizzled out on the last two chances

Digitized by Google

you had at target practise. I know it takes nerve to fire these big ones, but most of the boys have the fidgets before the actual firing begins. After a couple of shots they're as steady as clocks. You've been doin' just the opposite. You start strong, but fail to finish."

Lee Martin's face became red with anger at Danny's plain words.

"How do I know?" he said defiantly.

"All right," broke in Danny abruptly, "count yourself out. Ehret has put this up to me, and you won't do. I hoped you really would want to try again."

"I do," yielded the boy, "I'd give anything for just another chance."

"Don't do any skirmish drill then," answered Danny. "Come out with the whole story. I want to know what you have never told anybody, or else you'll never have a chance to point the twelves again."

For full half a minute the younger man said nothing, and sat looking out the window to where the streams of white smoke eddied up from the cracking six-pounders. Then he began very humble, and told his story.

"It's the *Missouri*," he said. "She's been in the fleet both times I've tried to point. An older brother of mine was on her when she had her turret accident, back in the days before the automatic blowers. He didn't point that day. He was afraid of the flarebacks and refused duty. Being in the brig saved his life. When the explosion came, they let him off easy, and he finished out his cruise. He only had a couple of months to do anyhow."

"What was your brother's name?" asked Danny.

"Milo," answered the other.

"What became of him?"

"He died," answered Martin, "but that wasn't the worst of it. He had it hanging over him always that he had failed when the big test came, and he has told me many a time that he wished he had died with the gun crew. Somehow I can't help but think of it when I get up there to fire. For the first few shots I'm all right, and then shut away from the rest of the crew I'm all alone in the noise and smoke and I get to wondering what I would do if something happened, if I'd do my duty or show a streak of——"

"Stop!" said Danny vehemently. "Don't say 'yellow' in the same breath with Milo Martin. You've got this thing all wrong. Did anybody ever tell you how he broke away from the marine sentries when the trouble came aft, and was the first man to crawl into the turret after the thing happened? The two that got out alive he dragged out himself. Anything he ever did before was wiped out by that."

"Why didn't he know about it then?" asked Martin.

"That's what's been puzzlin' me as you talked," said Danny. "But I remember now. He got his lungs singed in there, and stayed in the hospital until he was paid off. I guess he never did know how the ship felt about him."

"Then you think he did all right?"

"I do," said Danny fervently. "We all make mistakes, but mighty few of us are willing to make them good as strong as he did. Tell me about him. Was he sick long?"

"Three days," answered the boy. "Pneumonia."

"What more do you ask any man to give then?" said Danny. "Burned up his lungs saving his shipmates so that the first time he gets sick it hits him in the weak spot and kills him."

"But why didn't somebody write. Why didn't he ever tell me?"

"He had the other on his mind, I guess. And you know how the outfit is," apologized Danny. "The *Missouri* went out of commission for repairs. The men were scattered. Besides, everybody thought that Milo understood. But if you want proof, if you think I'm just tellin' you this to hearten you, what became of the medal for bravery that was recommended?"

The boy was startled.

"I've never heard of it before," he said.

"If that's how it stands," said Danny Wallace, "I don't blame you for bein' skeptical. But it's true as gospel, son, and you beat it out of here quick so I can go after proof. The red tape's tangled somewhere."

"Am I to point, then?" asked Martin.

"Sure!" said Danny. "We lay the jinx tonight. Go on down and join the crew. Tell any of 'em that ask you that you're takin' Cantrill's place.

"I'll try hard," promised the boy at the head of the ladder.

"Forget it," said Danny cheerily. "Nothing short of ninety per cent. is going to satisfy me."

Digitized by Google

Through the proper channels Danny sought an interview with the captain, and since he made it known that it was in regard to the relief gun-pointer for the forward turret, the captain sidetracked other matters and listened to him.

A few minutes later the long range wireless was reaching out into space and being relayed, searching for the item of naval history which Danny thought would help to make a record in the forward turret.

Late in the afternoon Danny Wallace had an answer to his message, and found Lee Martin coming out of the forward turret. He had been there most of the day, and had watched while Judson Allen, the other pointer, fired his string.

"Good news for you," said Danny. "Go and wash up, then come to the chart-room."

Martin hurried up the ladder five minutes later, and Danny Wallace motioned him to a seat on a chest.

"Here's the report," he said. "Captain Morley of the *Missouri* recommended a medal as I told you. The flag officer wouldn't sign the recommendation because your brother was on the report for a serious offense. They decided to wait and talk to Milo when he came from the hospital. He had to stay longer than they thought and did not come back.

"The thing was sidetracked and lost sight of. Captain Morley and the flag officer are both at the War College. After our captain explained to them today by wireless they took the matter up again, decided that Milo didn't have a square deal and sent in a recommendation to the Secretary of the Navy for a medal. As next of kin it will come to you."

Danny paused and looked at the younger man earnestly. Martin swallowed a couple of times, jumped from the chest and put out his hand.

"If anything does go wrong," he said, "I'l try to do my duty. With Milo's medal coming to me I must."

"Nothing can go wrong, son," said Danny, "if a man's heart is right. This practise will most probably reel off as smooth as a greased line, but for the sake of the unexpected I wish you'd put this little trinket in your pocket. It'll remind you of the other if a pinch comes."

"Whose is this?" asked Martin puzzled.

"Mine," said Danny smiling. "Take good care of it. I had the devil's own time gettin' it."

BUD CANTRILL sat on the edge of his cot in the sick bay, and heard the preparations going on for the night practise. It had been a good day for the ship. Men and machines had worked in perfect unison without a hitch. The after turret in particular had hung up a fine record, and Judson Allen in the forward turret had made seven hits.

Bud missed the use of his eyes terribly. He had almost worn out the hospital steward with questions, and wondered what kept Danny Wallace away so long. Just before the call to quarters Danny came.

"Who's taking my place?" demanded Bud, as soon as he heard the well-known voice.

"Lee Martin," said Danny promptly.

"He'll blow up on 'em," opposed Bud disgustedly.

"Maybe not this time," answered Danny with assurance.

"Why don't they use Beecher?"

"He's too slow, Bud. And don't you be worryin' about that turret. What's done can't be helped, and Martin's the best chance we have."

Bud growled gloomily and just then the call came to quarters, and Danny hurried away. A few minutes later the six-inch guns in the waist commenced their rhythmic crashing, and to hear better, the hospital steward and his apprentice went to the foot of the berth deck ladder. After a minute or two Bud Cantrill slipped noiselessly to the deck and groped his way to the sick-bay door.

Once outside, the plan of the familiar berth deck was almost as clear to him as if he could see. The deck was as dark as a closed house at night. Walking in his bare feet, with the noise of running men above, and the whirring ammunition hoists, he slipped by the group at the forward hatch without detection. So well did Bud know his ship that within three feet of the amidships ladder he put out his hand and found it. Stealthily he climbed to the deck, and sat down on a chest.

"I guess I'll be able to hear something, anyway!" he muttered.

Just then two six-pounders, almost above his head on the boat deck, started to fire, and the sharp crack of their discharge in

Digitized by Google

his ears made him creep further forward until he crouched beside the forward hatch coaming, just aft of his own turret.

"They'll be firing there soon," he thought, "and golly, how I'd like to pull off these bandages and get in on it!"

He fancied he could hear the rumble of the big electric ammunition hoists bring up the first shell, and in his mind's eye there was a picture of big Bruce Waco, stripped to trousers and undershirt, waiting for the word to crank in the breech-block. Bruce's hair would be flying, and his muscular hands would almost twitch in their eagerness to be off.

A quick, excited voice from below startled him. The voice said:

"Here's some cotton soaked with glycerin. Put it in your ears and you won't feel it."

It was one of the hospital apprentices, and Bud realized that if they came up the ladder any further, he would be discovered. At the same moment a gust of wind blew some of the acrid smoke from the six-pounders in his nose, and to keep from coughing in ear-shot of the hatch, he ran forward and outboard a little.

As he raised up to sneeze, the enormous black muzzle of one of the twelve-inch guns being trained swiftly from one extremity of its arc to the other, struck him across the neck, and hurled him to the deck, where he rolled over and over across the narrow gutter of the scuppers, and down the sheer side of the ship into the sea.

Cantrill was only momentarily stunned by the bump which the gun gave him, and the plunge into the cold water brought him instantly to full consciousness. His first thought was to get away from the suck of the propellers, and he swam with all his strength away from the ship. That danger past, he turned on his back to rest. The pull of the big propeller blades had been wide, and only by strong swimming had he missed being drawn in.

The bandage over his eyes had loosened during the struggle, and fell down around his neck, and the sting of the salt water in the raw wound had made his already swollen eyes almost useless. Listen and look as best he could, it was impossible to locate the ship, especially as she was running with battle lights only.

"Some one must have seen," thought Cantrill. "Any minute now the life-buoy will be overboard and alight, and the whaleboat will be after me."

But nothing happened. The smoothly undulating sea carried him monotonously to the crest of one wave and into the trough of the next one, while he half floated and half swam, using only enough strength to keep afloat.

And yet Cantrill was not much afraid. Unless the wind freshened and the waves became choppier, he was good for an hour at least, and in an hour, he told himself, the ship would begin firing, and he could locate her, at least. Long before that time, some of the hospital apprentices would miss him, a searchlight would pick him up, or the boat which tended the target would pass near enough to hail. So Cantrill saved his strength, and let the tide take him where it would.

HE HAD been overboard only a few minutes when his foot struck something. He whirled instantly, felt the force of the strong tide which had been carrying him, and with half a dozen vigorous strokes found the object he had touched. It was a trailing rope-end, and hauling himself in hand over hand, he crawled at length on to the raft of the target.

His first thought was to jump overboard again, for the ship might begin to fire at any moment, and he had seen too many wrecked targets not to know that it was safer in the water with the chance of being picked up, than on the target while the twelve-inch guns were firing.

Then he had another thought, as the beam of a searchlight from the ship struck the tending launch half a mile to the windward, "I'll wait until they pick up the target with a searchlight, and then signal them."

Taking the bandage from around his neck he unrolled it, then stood in front of the target, holding to one of the guy wires, and waited. The narrow white finger of light, after locating the launch and making sure that it was out of danger, moved swiftly toward him, and after a brief search found the end of the target, then settled full on the center, just over his head.

Cantrill waved furiously, but the things that he had not counted on were that he wore a white uniform, that he was almost up to his knees in water on the submerged raft, and that he had made almost an insignificant shadow low down on the huge

Digitized by Google

canvas. Only a few seconds after the searchlight found the target came the first shot from the twelves.

Cantrill did not see the flash with the glare in his eyes, but he heard the shell coming, just in time, and leaped hurriedly overboard and was under the water when the huge projectile passed through the top of the canvas. He almost went under water to stay, for in the urgent unplanned dive he had struck his shoulder against one of the raft's anchor chains, and been swept by the tide under the raft.

Struggling with his one arm, he presently emerged on the side of the target away from the ship, weak and winded, and glad to hold on with his good arm even to such a poor refuge as a target under fire. With only his head out of water he waited for the shots.

He could hear the shells coming, and see the flashes of fire from the muzzle. When the sound reached a certain shrill pitch like the top note of a thousand violins in concert, he shoved himself beneath the surface with his good hand, prayed that the shot was high, and then came up again to wait for another. Between shots he worked around the raft to get in front again, hoping to be seen, but his bad arm made the progress slow, especially as he must listen and watch constantly for the coming of another shell.

As long as the projectiles passed through the target cleanly or made misses overhead, he was safe with his head under water, but if one struck a solid part of the target low-down, he was done for.

"I'd drown sure, if I try to swim for it with this arm," thought Cantrill, "and a slim chance here is better than none."

At the eighth shot he had reached the end of the target and started to work up on the other side toward the center, when he heard the whizz of the shell, and dived. As he came up and waited for the next one, he was not sure in his mind of the count he had tried to keep so carefully. More than once his head had struck the raft a sharp blow as he came to the surface.

As he puzzled over it, and tried to recount, another shell almost surprised him and he went under with the roar of it singing in his ears. This time the tide swung him under the raft and he was slow in coming up. When finally he began to edge himself tediously along the raft again, the count was hazier than ever.

"That last one surely was the ninth," he said to himself. "One more to wait for, and it's all over, one way or the other."

After a time it seemed to Cantrill that the last shell was a long time in coming, and then mildly hopeful, he began to believe that he had miscounted and that the string had been fired. A few seconds more, and the thought became a certainty in his mind. Exerting all his will power, he pulled his bruised body upon the raft, and tottered unsteadily to his feet, spreading his arms in a signal. As he did so the muzzle of the starboard gun belched a tongue of white flame, and a huge, furiously curling gas ring widened from the muzzle.

So sure was Cantrill that the string had been fired that for an instant he could not believe his eyes. Then he heard the shell coming, with an ever increasing volume of sinister moanings. Too weak to again dive overboard he threw himself face downward on to the raft into the foot or more of water which covered it.

AS DANNY WALLACE crawled through the manhole into the forward turret, the members of the crew were busy at their stations, but Danny sensed a feeling of sullen resentment that a substitute pointer of very uncertain fiber under strain was to take the place of reliant Cantrill. Ehret, the turret captain, voiced this feeling as the men took stations awaiting the signal to fire.

"We're out for the trophy this year," he said sternly, "and any one of you that fails to deliver might as well jump overboard, for all the chance you'll ever have on this ship again."

He looked at Danny Wallace for approval, and met the old quartermaster's answering smile of faith and assurance.

"Martin's good for a clean string of hits," he said confidently, so that all the crew heard. "He's just promised Bud that he'll do it."

"Stand by! Six thousand yards!" came through the range telephone, and a moment later, "Commence firing!" The order had barely been given when Martin pressed the firing key. There was a thunderous vibrating shock of noise, and the big steel cylinder, half the height of a man across, rumbled awkwardly back against the recoil springs, steadied to a stop, then shot forward more evenly into its first position.

Digitized by Google

"Hit," came the simple word of approval from aloft, and then, racing against time, the gun crew jumped to the service of their steel master, as if the enveloping volume of sound had been the signal which loosed them, and the smell of the burnt powder the tonic necessary for hurry. There was no unnecessary noise or talking, no confusion.

The well-oiled whirr of the ammunition hoist, and the thudding ring of the projectile as the huge telescopic rammer jammed its copper rotating band into the rifling, were the dominant sounds, marking off the time into intervals on Ehret's stop-watch.

At the breech-block, Bruce Waco stood poised on the balls of his feet, waiting for the loaders to place the powder bags. As they stepped back he turned the crank swiftly, aiding the burdensome weight with his shoulders, and at the last turn of the locking threads gave Martin the "loaded" signal.

Almost instantly the gun let go again, and in the feverish interval of activity following, the turret captain had time to nod his approval as the spotter aloft called the shot a hit.

After the next shot, which was a hit also, the spotter telephoned the additional information that all of the hits so far were high, and Ehret cautioned Martin to aim a little lower. The next shot went directly through the center of the target.

"Keep it up, Martin," encouraged the gun captain.

But the next time the loaders were ready, and Martin pressed the firing key, there was no explosion. "Misfire!" he cried after a moment, and turned toward Danny Wallace and Ehret anxiously.

"Steady!" cautioned Danny.

"Take the other gun quick," ordered Ehret. "Keep clear of this one, all hands. Right in the middle of a winning string," he complained to Danny Wallace. "Hope it doesn't shake the kid's nerve."

More than a precious minute was lost in changing from one gun to the other, but when finally the gun spoke the shot was a hit, but full high on the target.

"Get 'em lower!" ordered Ehret tersely. "On the job, you loaders! We've got to get back some of that lost time."

The men in the turret and handling room worked feverishly, and when the tenth and last shot in the string was ready, the lost time had been gained back. Except for one shot, which had gone over, they had all been hits.

"Make it nine hits!" breathed the turret captain fervently, and the plugman tapped Martin the signal to fire.

Martin pressed the key, but nothing happened. The gun crew, sweating and smoke-streaked from their race against time, and wrought to a high tension of nervousness and expectancy by the long string of hits, waited impatiently for a moment, and then had their feelings voiced by the turret captain.

"What's the matter, Martin?" he said savagely. "Shoot! Don't go to pieces on us this near the end."

"It's another misfire," said Danny Wallace calmly. "Don't shout at the boy so, he's doin' fine. Switch to the other gun. She's already loaded. If she fires, we can still finish the string. The five-minute wait on her is about up."

"We'll make her fire," agreed the turret captain grimly. "Get a primer ready. Change over, Martin! Crew, take stations!"

Almost as quickly as the orders were given the men took positions around the first gun.

"Open the breech!" ordered Ehret a second later.

The heavy steel block unlocked, slid back, and swung aside. The gunner's mate jumped forward with the new primer, and the rest of the crew edged forward curiously to see why the gun had not fired. The gunner's mate saw the danger first, and cried in a voice shrill with fear,

"Close the breech quick, Bruce. She's afire!"

A black smoking spot in the muslin showed where the defective primer had scorched but not burned into the ignition grains of black powder. With the letting in of air from the outside a spreading line of live sparks ran across the hot cloth, and from a smolder threatened to break into a blaze.

Trained to obey, and having definite work to do, the plugman started to close the breech. The crew fell back, and the turret captain shouted an order below to close the magazine.

All this happened in seconds, for almost instantly Danny Wallace had leaped forward, thrust both hands into the breech, and torn the burning cloth away from the

Digitized by Google

powder. With one motion, and as lightning, quick as a shortstop in a double play, he threw the wadded-up bundle toward the gun-port. It missed the opening, struck the turret wall, and burst into flame, for in Danny's hurry some of the powder grains, had come with the cloth. They burned harmlessly but filled the turret with gas and smoke.

During all of the confusion and danger Martin had stood to his post. At the first warning cry by the gunner's mate, a spasm of panic had gripped him. He had visions again of a flame and gas filled coffin with its charred dead. Then his fingers tightened on a hard, round disc, and he stuck to his platform.

FROM then on Danny Wallace was the captain of that turret. In the almost stifling smoke a new primer was inserted, the damaged powder bag replaced with a new one, and as the breech again started to swing shut, he looked for Lee Martin, found him in his place and smiled with encouragement, as an instant after he gave him the signal, "Ready!"

The searchlight was gleaming on the target as Martin looked through the crossed wires, and just underneath on the platform a white and ghostly something seemed to be waving. The young pointer thought it a fancy of his smoke-filled eyes, and blinked them before he looked again, but the crossed wires were still on the object, and just as the muzzles hesitated to start downward, he pressed the firing key, remembering as he did so that he was aiming low to correct his high string.

Half a minute later Danny Wallace was shaking him by the shoulder, dancing around him like a boy, and singing out:

"Hit! You've made it nine times out of ten, and stood the test, boy! The last shot was a hit, do you hear me? And ten seconds to spare on the time limit!"

"Good!" said Martin a little dazedly. "I saw something waving on the target, something white."

"You sure did," said Danny. "You've torn the old thing to rags, with nine hits out of ten!"

As Danny came out on deck, an excited hospital apprentice clutched at his arm.

"Is Bud Cantrill in the turret?" he asked.

"Of course not," answered Danny, a little perplexed. "You fellows were patching him up in the sick-bay the last I heard."

"He's not in the sick-bay!" exclaimed the boy. "He's gone. We've been searching the ship for him for ten minutes."

"He's bound to be around somewhere," spoke Danny Wallace soothingly. "Report it to the officer of the deck, and have the word passed for him."

"We've done that already," said the other. "He's overboard, that's where he is!"

Then Danny thought of what Martin had said as they came out of the turret. If Cantrill had stumbled overboard while his eyes were bandaged, he might have made the target, and Martin's ghost might be human, after all.

Running aft, Danny told his suspicions to the first lieutenant, and a moment later was signaling with the red and white lights to the launch which tended the target. Meanwhile, the search for Cantrill continued for Danny Wallace had told no one but the first lieutenant of his suspicions, that Cantrill might be on the target raft.

Five minutes later the launch was signaling excitedly from both bow and stern that Cantrill was on the target, and alive, and in half an hour he was safe aboard with his shoulder in place, eyes rebandaged and bruises dressed. When he had recovered some of his strength, the doctor let Danny Wallace, Martin and Ehret in to see him.

"You made some string, boy," Cantrill said to Martin. "Old Bud will have to shake a leg if he ever beats that record. How'd you come to do it?"

"This did it," said Martin smiling, and held out Danny Wallace's medal for Bud to feel. "Danny loaned it to me just befor I went in to fire."

And then Danny told Martin's story.

After Martin and Ehret had gone, Cantrill turned to Danny quizzically.

"What gets me," he said, "is that Martin has always fired as the ship starts on a downward roll and usually shoots low. But this time all the shots are high One low one would have fixed me, but the only miss he made was over."

Danny smiled contentedly.

"Well, you know, Bud, it was up to me to make that Martin boy shoot right. He's a good boy, but he needs a little help. One of the ways I helped him was to use a monkey wrench on the telescope sights, so there would be no low shots in the string."

Digitized by Google

The CAMP-FIRE

A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

FOLLOWING our Camp-Fire custom, Clyde B. Hough, rises and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in *Adventure:*

Regarding my story, "Darcy Deserts." The ant-hill torture referred to was, on several occasions, meted out to American soldiers by the insurgents. In the early days of the insurrection a certain officer (I don't remember his name) was captured by the Filipinos and held for several months. In writing up his experience in one of the magazines he expressed the belief that he would have been executed had it not been for a large cross tattooed on his chest. The natives seemed to fear him on that account. Otherwise my story is purely imaginary.

ABOUT myself there is not much to tell. I was born on a small farm in Anson County, N. C. I think I was born with the wanderlust boiling in my blood. At any rate the farm was too small, too slow or something. So at the ripe old age of fourteen I drove the cows to pasture one Sunday morning, turned them in, fastened the gate and kept going.

The next few years were divided between going to sea, hoboing and working in cotton-mills. It was my boast that I never worked in any one mill longer than two weeks.

One of my hobo trips took me to the Everglades in Florida, where I stayed awake all night, one night, keeping a fire going to prevent a somewhat insistent panther from making its evening meal on the body of my mother's son.

AT NINETEEN I lied my way past a recruiting officer and joined the Eleventh Cavalry, a new regiment then being formed at Fort Myer, Va. After some preliminary training the Eleventh was sent, via Suez Canal, to the Philippines.

For the next two years I graced the hills of Luzon and played tag with the little Brown Men. At the expiration of my enlistment in the cavalry I returned to the States, put on the brakes at St. Louis long enough to see the Fair and then reenlisted in the Marine Corps. Did guard duty, as a marine, in San Francisco during the fire and earthquake and, believe me, that was the nastiest little party I ever attended. I succeeded in making the officers of the Marine Corps think I was a good sergeant. But was finally discharged on account of a heart that refuses to recognize speed laws.

SINCE then I have been in California making a living in ways too numerous to mention. And by the way, my name is pronounced just as though it was spelled Huff. No, I am not German. My forefathers came from Holland in 1600.

I think that's about all so I'm going to roll a smoke and crawl under the blanket. *Buenos noches, hombres.*

RUN back in your mind over all the big delays in our war preparations that are due solely and entirely to obstructing Congressmen. Then make your estimate of how many of these unpatriotic delays are due to what we call party loyalty. When any man gives his first loyalty to a political party he is giving disloyalty to his country. Party and country are not the same.

Loyalty is always, I think, to be commended in itself. We even have a certain respect for loyalty among thieves. But it does make quite a difference what you're loyal to. Party loyalty seems rather a low-grade and unintelligent kind. And when party loyalty means disloyalty to an infinitely higher and bigger cause it is downright criminal.

When you come to think of it, just *why* should we be loyal to a political party? When you come to think of it, just *what is* a political party?

There's the graft you can get out of it, of course, but let's suppose we're decent.

THERE are two big political parties and half a dozen smaller ones in the United States. Does that mean that there are only six or eight different sets of opinions among all the people of the United States? Of course not. But it does mean that if your set of opinions doesn't agree with those of any of these parties your set of opinions can't get expressed.

If several million men vote for the platform of any one party does that mean that *all* those men believe in *all* the several dozen planks in that party's platform? Of course not. But when you don't believe in some of its planks you have to vote for them along with the others just the same. Sort of silly, isn't it?

Digitized by Google

And how much voice do *you* have in determining just what planks shall go into any political party's platform? Or, for that matter, even in selecting the men who shall be that party's candidates? What say do you have in *anything* besides choosing whether you will vote for or against certain measures, and for or against a certain very limited number of candidates, all of which and all of whom have been picked out for you by the leaders of that political party? Well, if you don't like it you can try one of the other parties and get the same dose.

When you come to think of it, just what *is* a political party? When you come to think of it, just *why* should we be loyal to a political party?

IN ACCORDANCE with our Camp-Fire custom that when one of us has a story in our magazine for the first time he is expected to stand up and tell us about himself, Vance Palmer gives us his adventures to date:

Melbourne, Australia.

I was born in the cane-country of North Queensland a little over thirty years ago in the days when little fleets of schooners carrying the sign of the Black Ball brought armies of coolies from the South Seas to work on the plantations. They came from everywhere, from Samoa to the Solomons, and as a boy I got my first knowledge of the Islands from listening to these exiled Kanakas talking round their fires at night. The South Seas seemed Arcady to me in those days. My chief ambition was to get hold of a schooner and sail away to some coral island where there were white beaches, waving palms and childlike natives who were willing to trade unlimited wealth in pearls and copra for a few sticks of tobacco and some coarse cloth. I have been up and down the South Seas since then, but I never found Arcady, though in Samoa and the Marquesas there are as good imitations as any one has a right to hope for in this planet.

WHEN I was eighteen or so I started writing short stories for papers and magazines and kept at it steadily in the intervals of a life spent as clerk, cattleman, school-teacher, proof-reader and half a dozen other incongruous occupations. It was Maxim Gorky who turned my thoughts from the South Seas to Russia. I went to Europe when I was twenty and, setting out from the west of Finland, beat across to Vladivostok on the Pacific Coast, traveling mostly third-class in post-trains and dropping off at all the little towns. At Tula I set out to walk to Tolstoi's place, but got lost in a snowstorm and gave up the pilgrimage. My chief difficulty all along was want of money. In a little leather pouch next my skin I carried enough for bare necessities, and I learned how to live for weeks on black bread and kringels. So with a tightened belt and light heart does Youth buy the experience that Age sells for hard cash!

Just then the Russian Revolution was in full blast, and a young foreigner traveling third-class with the peasants could not hope to escape the attentions of the police. In a small town in Siberia I spent two very pleasant days with a man whom I afterward discovered to be an "agent." But nothing very serious happened till I got to Vladivostok, and then an attack of water-poisoning laid me up in a hotel for three weeks. It was the time that the *Skory* and the *Grosovoi* mutinied and fired on the town, 300 people being killed in the streets, and I lay listening to the firing and expecting the roof to crumble every minute. The fact that I was near the end of my money did not make matters more cheerful. The fat German landlord told me that the mutinous torpedo-boats had sown mines and that there would be no boats leaving the port for some time, and that anyhow the harbor would be ice-locked very soon. I was too ill to care much what happened, but when I saw the bill (which was about a yard long in the Siberian fashion and amounted to more than I had left) I felt it was time to assume convalescence.

THERE happened to be one old timber-tramp leaving that day and the few rubles I persuaded the landlord to knock off the bill enabled me to buy a steerage-ticket to Japan. I found myself in a dark hold with about a hundred Manchu coolies who squatted on a table under a swinging oil-lamp and fought over dice, and when we encountered a typhoon in the Japan Sea that steerage was the nearest approach to inferno I can imagine. I had been on some rough voyages before, and I have since. Twice I crossed the Atlantic on emigrant-ships among the flotsam of Little Russia and the Balkans; once I traveled with coolies going from Nagasaki to Singapore; and in the steerage of a German boat I put in some unpleasant days with cosmopolitan derelicts going from Port Said to Algiers. But for pure discomfort nothing could beat that week among the Manchu coolies, and even now I can smell the reek of opium and stale cabbages.

COMING down to Sydney from Japan and the Islands, I met Jack London aboard the *Snark*. He was full of the South Seas just then, and lounging on the deck of the *Snark* he told me some of the stories he had gathered in two years of voyaging. But I was tired of ships and the sea just then, and wanted to see something of life on the big cattle-stations. For over a year I worked as a cattleman in Western Queensland, and then set out wandering again. A man who is writing short stories can't have too great a variety of material to work upon, and travel stimulates the eyesight and the brain, especially when it is not done in the upholstered saloons of expensive liners but in battered tramps that poke round the byways of the world. And things happen around the man who keeps moving. I was in Mexico when the counter-revolution broke out and in France when the present war started, and I hope to be in Germany when the present war ends.

WORD from a comrade, one of the many whose one idea nowadays is how to serve our country at the front in spite of slight physical characteristics that keep

Digitized by Google

them from getting there by the regular channels.

Good luck to him and to all of them.

Mr. Seabrook had not long before written me concerning certain German-stirred threats and troubles in Chile, which explains a reference in his brief note:

Chuquicamata, Chile.

Your letter of the twenty-eighth of May came in this morning. I wrote to you last week and told you then of my plans for the future. I may be foolish in not coming home and joining up, but I am afraid that my eyes (I am unfortunate enough to have to wear glasses) might cause my turndown and so I am going straight to the front. If they will not let me in the Army I can at least drive an ambulance.

Our little troubles down here must have seemed very small in the light of the larger happenings in the States. I read tonight of the ovation given to "Papa" Joffre and it made my blood tingle.

If I ever see New York again I shall show myself.—C. R. SEABROOK.

HERE'S a letter that Edgar Young wrote to me perhaps a year ago. Some people accuse me of being systematic, I am—up to a certain point. I have to be. Sometimes I pick up a copy of our magazine, look at the few pages of "Camp-Fire" and wonder how so little could involve such a remarkable amount of work. Detail, I guess. I don't ask you to believe me, for in spite of facts I find it hard to believe it myself, but there are acres of detail in getting a "Camp-Fire" together—the kind of detail a fellow has to go slowly on, for he can't just throw it at the printer.

Oh, well, I won't go into that. If I have to handle a lot of detail at all I'm glad it's Camp-Fire detail. I'm just talking around a bit to explain that, even if systematic as charged against me, there are plenty of times when Camp-Fire detail rolls me down.

FOR example here's that letter of Edgar Young's. I don't know why it has been tucked away somewhere for a year or so. Nor why it has just bobbed up again. Nor why it wasn't in the issue that contained the story of Mr. Young's upon which it bears more or less—"The Yardstick" in the March, 1917, number. Nor just why I had led him into talking about Mr. ——, unless it was because I'd met, very briefly, a man of that name in Bocas del Toro several years ago and had asked Mr. Young whether it was the same man. I'd also met—and liked immensely—another man, named Penny, in San Jose, C. R.—dead, now, I understand—but not the Penny Mr. Young mentions. Well, anyhow here's the letter:

Now speaking of Mr. ——. A man named Barnes, a Harvard man but not a graduate, C. L. Barnes or C. R. it was, and your humble servant walked on the fag-end of the trip from Mexico, from Puerto Viejo (Old Harbor) across the mountains to the Sexola (Sexaola also Saxaola) River. We swam this and slept in our wet clothing on the Panama side of the river, in fact we swam both forks the same afternoon. I lost both of my socks, which I had stuffed in my hip pocket while swimming the river. I had lost a shoe the day before and had on a pair of Barnes's oxfords and no socks when we put out from the river the next morning. We struggled through the dense vegetation for four or five hours and at last came to a cleared right of way for a narrow-gage road.

AND when we came to the end of steel a white man and several blacks were doing some surveying and stake-driving. A railroad gasoline-car stood on the track. We bade them good morning as if we had only been out taking a constitutional morning walk. They returned the salutation. After passing and proceeding for four or five hundred yards I looked back and saw the white man staring down the rails after us. Soon after he began to shout and wave to us. We stopped and he came down with his car. He wanted to know where we were going and said he would take us in his car. This he did to Victoria, where he lived, and from where we caught a banana train to Changenola Junction.

This was Mr. ——. He was a contractor and had the contract to build some roads for the United Fruit. Since you make mention of it, I believe I heard in Panama that he was Superintendent of Railroad Construction for the United Fruit Co. He was not superintendent at the time I came through, for I met the superintendent. I forget his name. He wouldn't employ any one that didn't hail from Vermont and promptly ordered us out of that part of Costa Rica.

That was in 1909. I hope he got fired and that —— finally got his job, and from what you say in your letter I suspect he did.

I SUPPOSE, considering the connection, that the name —— should be changed, although when I used it I thought perhaps he might be down on his luck somewhere and would remember, and I am sure he has not forgot the two tatterdemalions who came out of the jungle on to his new right of way. The name "Jim Brown" is also of a real man. He is *the* Jim Brown, and an institution in Central America. I consider names like Jim Brown, Old Man Penny, Lee Christmas and several others legitimate in fiction.

Jim Brown built the bridge I crossed the Bananita River on. He was building a bridge at Changenola when I got there and he *did* tell me the distance from the guard-house to the bridge. Jim Brown is known as "the best guy in the world" to all Typical Tropical Tramps.

Digitized by Google

YOU would be surprised how many hundred men have hit the trails of Central America. Sometimes just a name like that in a story brings many letters from readers who write to ask about the incident. I met a man in a small town down south who was selling paint for a big New York house. He had the top of his ear cut off. A Salamanca Indian cut it off near where I swam the Sexola and he broke the handle out of an ax that I found in an old cabin on the way over from Old Harbor and opened a coconut with it.

OUT of Macedonia comes further word from our Camp-Fire comrade M. Logie. Here's hoping he'll be back home ready for further duty by the time you read this.

Just a few lines to say all goes well with this *hombre.* Hoping the same of you all. Came through the recent operations O. K. We received a bit of a cutting up, which is to be expected. The Bulgar is "some boy" with the guns, and he knows how to distribute a barrage, but all the same we got our objective, but could not stick it; made a dawn attack for a wind-up but the Bulgar's barb-wire put the kibosh on it. Still up the line, over toward ——, soft enough. The weather is getting pretty hot at present, can stick that O. K., but those —— flies get one's goat.

WELL! I'm in hopes that I'll get clear of this outfit soon. I understand that all Americans are to be returned to train the U. S. forces. In fact, there have been orders come this way for all Americans serving out here, so am just marking time for the day, believe me. I've got a belly-full of this. Wish the X, I was rambling up Broadway now! I sure would hit the cold lager or rickies.

I hope to be able to pay you a call, in the near future; willing to bet it will be inside of two months.

Have just come across another Yank who is in the R. F. A.; belongs to Wash., D. C. Long time in old Mexico, also served in the U. S. A. and U. S. N. like myself. He is one of the old original; the world is a small place after all. Well, will close now with best regards to Old Glory and yourself. Am enclosing a small photo of myself, a Wintry-looking scene.—LANCE CORPORAL, M. LOGIE, Macedonia.

ALBERT H. OFFORD, of Santa Monica, California, sends the Camp-Fire a letter from his youngest brother "somewhere in France." It is an epic of suffering, endurance, courage. Mr. Offord sends us also a suggestion about "Ask Adventure." (That department has been received with more enthusiasm than any other Camp-Fire Department we've ever had.) His plan is a valuable one, but it's only fair to warn you that it may have the drawback of requiring two copies of each issue of *Adventure* if clippings are pasted (not if loose and indexed); it's only fair, too, to tell you that for some time I've been planning some day to issue little books or booklets covering each department of "Ask Adventure."

IN A year or so each department editor will have answered many questions and have ready in his files some wonderfully good material. It will be the most practical material of its kind ever collected, for it will give exactly the information that people wanted and asked for. I'm not making definite plans till we see just how that material shapes up in bulk and kind, but I think some scheme can be found whereby we can offer you a library of books or booklets you'll be very glad to have. They should sell for enough to give a few cents profit each to the department editors who write them, to cover cost of manufacture and handling and probably to net the magazine a few cents on each, but that can be done without making the price a high one. They will vary in size, so prices might range all the way from fifteen cents to a dollar; possibly more, but I don't think so and I'd like to keep the price as low as possible.

Remember, nothing definite is yet decided and there may be no such books at all, but when passing on to you Mr. Offord's suggestion for making a permanent file of "Ask Adventure" I felt I ought at least to tell you of the above possibility. Here is his plan, a good one:

Say, I want to tell you what I am doing (and if you pass this on it may be appreciated by some of the boys). I have bought a loose-leaf book for sixty-five cents, indexed. And I have started with the March issue and have cut out the questions and answers and pasted them in said book under their respective departments. To these I will add each month. At the end of a year I will have a lot of very valuable information at my command, which will only take me about three minutes to find any time. I have already catalogued the "Camp-Fires." (I always cut that part out and the rest of the book I pass on to others.)

AND here is the letter from Mr. Offord's brother who, he writes, "is very quiet on where he has been and what he has done, except to us in the family and even there we have to press him." The omitted part of the letter is of a purely personal nature:

It is about six weeks now since I was able to write you a letter. Well, now that I am in *bed,* I am trying my best to let you have a letter. It is a wee bit awkward, because I must keep my left leg still,

Digitized by Google

but it is so monotonous doing nothing that I am doing this to fill up time whilst I can. You must have the news first.

ON THE seventh of October we went "over the top" and I stopped a shrapnel bullet in the left thigh just behind the knee. This was about five minutes to two in the afternoon (Saturday). I bound myself up as best I could and lay in a shell-hole, waiting for stretcher-bearers.

It got dark and light again and none had appeared, so I settled myself down to the fact that I must lie in "No Man's Land" all day. Naturally I had had nothing to eat or drink since before we went "over" and I had none in possession.

Whilst laying in my shell-hole on Sunday, our people were preparing for another attack and consequently were "searching" the ground with shells. These were bursting quite close to me. Naturally the Huns replied and their shells were doing the same, so between the two I was like a bridegroom under an arch of sabers. I think I can safely say they were coming down within three yards on every side of me. Never have I said my prayers so many times as I did then and they were truly answered for sometimes a shell would come right in my hole —*zonk!* Would you believe it, every one that did refused to explode!

THEN the attack started and the "barrage" commenced. A "barrage" is a curtain of fire to cover the advancing troops. The shells burst over their heads and sweep the ground in front of them. I believe I must have gone a bit in front of ours and so got my bullet in the back of the leg. Still, that doesn't matter.

Well, I survived the second day's "barrage."

When at last it was dark, I decided that I would make an effort to get back to our own lines. Being unable to walk, I had to crawl, keeping my left leg straightened the whole time. Remembering that we had wheeled a little to the left on leaving our trench, I made my way by wheeling a bit to the right. However, I overstepped the mark and did too much of a circular motion, and after some hours of crawling I found I was going toward the Hun lines. What attracted my attention to it was the fact that the Huns started to counter-attack. Of course I did an "about-turn" and continued my journey toward a valley.

Very soon I was "whacked," so I found another shell-hole in which I might spend the following day, which would make two and a half days "out in front." This also was a day of rather heavy shelling.

WELL, when it was light, I had a look around the surrounding country to see if I could spot any trenches. As I slowly raised my head, some one spotted me immediately and hailed me. He was in what appeared to me to be a trench. He beckoned me and I made a sign that I could not move, so he crawled out to me on his hands and knees. I raised hopes that he was a stretcher-bearer, but when he reached me I was disappointed, for he was wounded like myself and had joined me for company.

During the day I learned from him that there were trenches running around the spot where he had been and at night I tried to find them. After a fruitless crawl for some hours, I had to settle in another hole for a further day.

THE same routine occurred—heavy shelling—and I made a good observation of the surrounding country this time and was fortunate to spot a prominent tree which would make a good objective for me at night. I then summed things up to myself: "Here have I been three and one-half days in 'No Man's Land' with nothing to eat or drink and, if that's a trench, I must get there, whether it's British or German." Had it been German I should have been a certain prisoner because I couldn't possibly have crawled out again. Well, I reached the tree and passed it and got into a trench, hailed a fellow, and found that he was British. How delighted I was! But all I could do was to lie down, because I was completely "fagged." I got a drink of water, which was truly relished, you can bet.

TO CUT a long story short, I spent three more days in the trench under heavy bombardment, as they attacked from there one day. Three nights running I was promised I should be taken out, and each time I was left. I expect it was because I did not belong to their battalion that they didn't put themselves out on my account. My battalion bearers couldn't attend to me because they were relieved the same night as our attack.

Well, on the fourth night another party took me out and that started my journey on to here. When once I had started I was well away, being continually handed over to all the different branches.

I MIGHT mention that every one is quite surprised at my condition, considering I was wounded seven days before I got attention and had had practically nothing in the way of food (only just what I could scrouge during my three days in the trench, viz:—two pieces of bread and butter and a few haricot beans.) In fact, the doctor says I had "a week in the country."

I am going to finish this letter as soon as I can, as I do not feel much like writing whilst in bed. Please excuse me, but I shall give you the main points:

My artery was completely severed and the operation has been performed and the severed ends tied at the origin. To do this it was necessary for them to take a piece of flesh twelve inches long and about three or four inches wide out of my leg. It is now a case of waiting to see whether I shall have to lose my leg or not. So far *no*, but one can never tell. The foot is warm, but there is no pulse yet. However I shall let you know immediately either way, if only one or two words. Don't worry, because I have every belief that I shall come out whole.

Please convey best wishes etc. to my various friends. . . . . .

—HARRY.

A POSTSCRIPT from the wounded man's brother brings less cheerful news, but, even so, it would seem that Sergeant Harry Offord has reason to be glad his grit and pluck were able to bring him alive out of what would have finished most men. Here's to him!

Digitized by Google

At this writing a later letter from a hospital in Newcastle-on-Tyne just arrived from same source, stating that his leg was going on "too well," for it's cut up against him. The X-rays have been put on him and show that his leg contains some "foreign matter," which is probably more shrapnel (he's had six pieces taken out already), and a bone has been chipped, a piece being missing.

So he's got to have another operation. He says the only thing he's funky about regarding the operation is the compulsory "Blackjack" (a black fluid medicine) overnight.

Sergeant Harry Offord has been on active service nineteen months and has been promoted on the field. And this is the only wound he has received, which he says will leave him crippled for the rest of his days, either with a short or stiff leg. He is twenty-three years of age.

THIS Hollander comrade is wrong in thinking I had never before been addressed from a Mexican jail, as some of you will remember. Also I've had letters from jails pretty close to Mexico and from people in Mexico who, though not in jail, couldn't get out of Mexico. This letter reached me back in January, after a somewhat roundabout journey. Besides the writer's own dramatic story, it bears on Tiburon Island:

I suppose you receive many letters from queer places, but I doubt whether you ever have been addressed from the place where I am at the present, that is, a Mexican jail. That explains why I can not use anything else but a pencil and this kind of paper. The story of how I happened to get here is a long one but it may be of interest to readers of ADVENTURE who are thinking of visiting Tiburon Island. I will try to make it as short as possible.

I AM a Hollander, 31 years of age and of adventurous disposition, have traveled all over Europe, Africa, India, Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Celebes, Indo-China and at last the U. S., Canada and Mexico. I had some mining interests in the south of this country and made quite a few trips between New York and Vera Cruz since 1914.

In Mexico City I met another Hollander who told me about the huge quantity of unexplored gold and other mines on the west coast and mentioned Tiburon Island. He did not go over there because he had no means, but was thinking of making the trip later on.

I asked him to accompany me, as I could manage his expense, but then I heard that he had some obscure reason for not passing through the States and, the other way being unsafe, I left him alone.

In Mexico City I dug up all the stuff I could get regarding the Gulf of California, the west coast of Mexico and the Island of Mystery. One of the many things a Mexican tries to conceal from foreign investigation is the fact that his country is not half civilized and that he is too lazy to take advantage of the richness of the soil. This is why I could only find out very little about the facts I wanted to know.

IN A history of Mexico, printed somewhere in the 18th century, I read something about Indians offering precious stones, as turquoises, etc., to a general who was conquering some land in the neighborhood of Guaymas. This does not prove that the stones came from Tiburon Island and that was all I could find. But stories and legends are plentiful and I decided to get busy. The 4th of October, 1916, I left Mexico City and via Laredo and San Antonio, I traveled to —— where I had some business to attend to. . . .

I must not forget to mention that I had secured the November number of *Adventure* in Laredo and what I read in "Camp-Fire" about Tiburon Island had made my intention stronger than ever. My plan was to go to Guaymas, hire a good motor-boat and a few men and approach the island from the S. W. Fate changed everything. I had to stop at ——, where I had to see a Mr. X., for whom I had a letter of introduction and with whom I wanted to talk about some mining prospects.

I BELIEVE in hard luck; mine started in Nogales, Arizona. There I received a message from Mexico City informing me that I was ruined. How this happened to pass is another long story which has nothing to do with the present one; the fact remains thus that I was left practically penniless.

Nevertheless, I went to —— and met Mr. X. who tried to persuade me not to go to the island, but, seeing that I was determined, he introduced me to a young man who was starting a farm, not far from——. This man was going out there on his wagon and he offered me a seat. This saved me the price of a bad horse and made me pass the time talking with this young settler. He was a German petty-officer of one of the German boats interned in Santa Rosalia. He had decided to do some farming, in company of another sailor and the Government of Sonora had given them a few hundred acres of land to start with. They were clearing land and digging a well and hoped to be able to do something. They had never seen a Seri nor anything like it, though they lived about twenty miles from the coast, but they had heard about them and about the treasures the island is supposed to contain.

IT WAS a desolate country we traversed on the way to their farm. My lips were parched and swollen by the alkali dust and during the night I felt the biting cold. I had pictured the land differently. Maps show several rivers from —— to the coast, but there is not a single one in existence. My equipment was not in accordance with the climatic conditions and, when the two settlers asked me to stay with them for a while, I accepted, intending to await some rain and warmer nights.

I learned that the Governor of Sonora intended to form a German colony in these parts in order to prevent a Japanese one from being started. Any German, Switzer, Hollander or Dane could get a few hundred acres of land to cultivate. The only condition was that a well should be dug and a house built and the settler was not allowed to play absentee-landlord but had to stay on the spot. The Government helped with horses, tools, etc. These two sailors, being the first settlers, had to demonstrate that the proposition was worth while and the Government provided them with everything they wanted, provisions, tools, horses, plows, well, everything, even cigarets and working clothes.

Digitized by Google

Though I do not sympathize with the German cause, I am neutral and these two fellows being of the good kind, I soon made friends with them and helped, digging the well. When the well would be dug they were to receive the title to the land. (By the way, the well has been finished about 3 months ago and they don't have the title yet. I am pretty sure they'll never get it, the Mexican Government reserving the right to take that land away from them when it feels like it.)

ON ABOUT half a mile from the place where we were working, another settler, Y., partner of Mr. X., had a farm and was showing results. Y.'s land was not included in that Government proposition. This Y. was a very nice fellow and he asked me to keep him company till I would think of going on my way to the island. The 12th of December I made up my mind to stay a short while on his farm, as I purposed to start in January. I made several trips on horseback to the coast and at last I came to the conclusion that it was absolutely impracticable to reach Tiburon Island without a boat and without a strong escort. A major of the Mexican Army promised me both, if I only would wait till he came back from Mexico City, where he had been sent by the Governor of Sonora; so I stayed on with Y.

We had plenty of rifles and went hunting every day; plenty of wild boars, rabbits and hares around there. Also plenty of coyotes which come howling around the house every night.

THE 26th of December, I was sitting in the house in company of the only Mexican laborer we had. The wait was for Y. who had gone hunting and not returned yet, though it was dark already. The coyotes were howling at a few hundred yards of the house when all at once the dog starts to bark furiously. Accustomed as I was to that barking, I did not pay any attention to it, thinking that some coyote had come a little nearer than the others. But the barking was getting unusually strong, so I stepped out to see whether there would be a coyote near enough to take a shot at him.

It was too dark to see well but I could faintly distinguish a yellowish object toward which the barking was directed. I went inside again, took a rifle and walked out. The dog was still barking and the yellow object was still in the same place. Not doubting that it was a coyote, I took aim, as carefully as I could in the dark, and shot. A few seconds afterward I heard a voice calling, "Ho! Ho! Ho!" and I thought "This is undoubtedly Y. returning from hunting and telling me not to shoot." I was surprised though, because he never used to come from that direction. But I had not much time to think about it, for directly afterward Y. calls out: "Oh, what have you done?"

Half dazed by the thought that I must have wounded him, I answered: "Well, what have I done?"

"You have shot me in the leg!"

THIS conversation was going on without me seeing Y., but at his last words he started walking toward me and *then* only did I see that the yellow object I had faintly distinguished and mistaken for a coyote had been his khaki trousers. That he did not move when I came outside for the first time, that he did not cry out when he saw me with the rifle (I had taken aim twice, the Mauser rifle being locked first), will ever be a mystery to me. I stood plainly all the time in the light of the lamp, which stood near the open door of the house.

Well, to make a long story short, the Mexican laborer, who had gone outside after the shot, and I ran toward Y., who fell before we reached him. We brought him on his cot and I soon discovered that he was beyond help. The bullet hit him in the groin and cut the femur. I bandaged him as well as I could and with the help of the German settler whom I had sent for, we loaded him on a wagon in order to bring him to——. Y. talked quite a few words with us, but shortly afterward he died.

ANOTHER American ranch-owner was kind enough to despatch a cowboy to the city with a note, advising Mr. X. of the accident. At my arrival within the city limits I was arrested and put in prison. Though it has long since been proven that Y.'s death was due to a deplorable accident for which I am not to blame, the Mexican authorities still keep me here and seem even to have forgotten that I exist. They think that I have a lot of money and are hoping that I will offer some day to buy my liberty. They have already given me to understand that five or six hundred pesos Mexican gold—that means $250--$300 U. S.—would get me out of this. They can wait a long time if they think I am able to pay a penny. When they will realize that I do not possess a single peso they will probably take me to the back yard, the same as they have done to so many others. They ought to save their ammunition.

Well, I need not tell you what Mexican prison-life means. Company, food, dirt, everything is enough to drive a civilized man crazy, but sleeping on the stones where all the prisoners spit is pretty sure to kill the strongest. I need not mention that they nearly all have some disease and I fear these more than their 30-30's.

FOR myself I don't care very much, but when I think that there is my young wife and baby waiting in the old country it makes me sick at heart. They returned to Holland in August and I was to follow in March. They don't know anything yet because I have not found the courage to write what has happened.

The reason why I am writing this to Camp-Fire is that I hope you will be able to interest your readers for my case. If about three hundred of them would contribute a dollar they might get me out of this. I repeat I don't ask this for me and I have never asked the help of anybody before in my life, but I don't have only myself to think of. I do this as a last resort, as I don't have any friends in the States, nor in Mexico. Of course I can not receive letters where I am now. (I hope I will be able to get this out.) If you are kind enough to interest your readers and obtain results, kindly let me know through Mr. X., ——, Son., Mexico. I would be very thankful if you would send me a copy of *Adventure* as an acknowledgment of the receipt of this letter.

Hoping to hear from you in the near future, I beg to remain——.

IN THIS letter, of course, the real proper names were given and the writer's name signed.

Digitized by Google

His appeal upset me, for I had a hunch that he was writing only the truth and, if so, he needed and deserved help. But on the other hand we can not make our Camp-Fire a place for appeals for help. One exception, however justified in itself, would let down the bars to all kinds of appeals. Nor did I have anything except my own personal belief with which to back up his letter. Since, however, he had asked to have his appeal made public through the Camp-Fire, I felt warranted in taking up his case with the Netherlands consular authorities and they responded promptly. And then, luckily, came a second letter from him:

I wrote you some time ago from the *penitenciaria* of this town and fortunately I have not received any answer as yet. At the time I wrote you I was not exactly in the highest of spirits and if you can put yourself for a moment in my position, you will easily understand this.

A few days after writing that letter, I was put in liberty, one of my friends having taken care of this.

I hope you will kindly excuse and forget my first letter.

I have not given up the idea of visiting Tiburon Island, but shall wait till I can bring together a party of five or six, because it would be utter foolishness to go alone. I keep myself at the disposition of readers of *Adventure* to furnish them with information concerning the island, its approaches, difficulties, etc.— —— ——.

THERE are many of you, tucked away in various far corners of the earth, with whom, in one way or another, I have come to exchange letters and who seem somehow to have become old friends, though in most cases we have never even seen each other. Such correspondences are a pleasure and satisfaction but I fear it is I who get most from it, for your letters are always interesting while I am so rushed and busy that my letters must be briefer than I'd like. Many of your letters, of course, are as much for the rest of you as for me and you hear them at our Camp-Fire; some are meant for me alone; some, though meant for me, can now and then be given to all of you. In the last class are the two letters that follow, for I wrote to Dr. Robertson in Honduras and got his permission.

DO YOU know, it is "some job" to give the Camp-Fire all the interesting news and letters possible without letting something slip into print that the man who wrote the letter would rather not have published. Of course if a man says that his letter is not for publication, that's easy. It's the letters that *don't* say that make the trouble.

In general I take it for granted that the letters that come in are for the Camp-Fire as well as for me. Sometimes, however, even without the writer's saying so, it's evident that they are not for publication. If there's doubt and I can conjure up any reason why the writer *might* object, I write him for permission. Sometimes, when this was not feasible, I've taken chances. But I play it pretty safe and I'm glad to say that in all the magazine's seven years no one of you has complained of my violating his confidence or being indiscreet with his letters.

Perhaps I have unconsciously done these things but at least it hasn't been serious enough to call forth a remonstrance. Many a time, indeed, I've protected you against your own indiscretions of utterance.

All of which boils down to this: I do my best to keep things right, but the best and safest plan is for those who write me letters to protect both themselves and me by adding the words "No objection to using this," or "Please don't publish," or some such definite label.

And now back to the two letters from our friend Dr. Robertson, writing from Honduras:

I'm urged to tell you of a late happening so unexpected, so utterly incredible that a novelist incorporating it in his writing would receive the grand Ha Ha! And yet verily I say unto thee 'tis true. To me it happened but a short space agone. Man, man, it would have made ye thrill, to have seen it. A bit of Scot you wouldn't have thought much of at first glance, but all the same a tidy chunk of a man, round-buttocked and barrel-chested, hairy—(why do they always make their heroes thin-flanked and broad? Give me the man with the small waist and the big round buttocks. Time and again I've proved it and I know,) broad-fronted, with keen green eyes, but say, to see him in action, ah, man, it's not given to one to see such often!

WE HAD foregathered on the road. I had dismounted to ease my saddle a bit—I always do after riding a while; slacken the girth, raise the blankets in the hollow of the saddle, let a grateful breath of air cool the heated back and then make the girth snug—mark ye, snug, no more. The man who rides with a tight girth is no horseman. How'd you like to be put at a day's work with your guts puckered? If you look to have a good horse, treat him right, do by him like he was folks and he'll pay you back, be a good servant and, yes, a true friend.

Digitized by Google

WELL, I was doing this when Scotty came jogging along, easy leg over the horse, cutting tobacco off a big plug with the only jack-knife I've ever coveted.

Says I, "G'mornin', my lad, and forgive me but where in the name of good things can I get a knife like that?"

Man, he grinned. "Ye'll have to kill a Lascar to get one, I'm thinkin'. Anyway I got this off a dead sailorman wi' a kris hole in him a foot long and the knife tight gripped in his mug. I had to pry him off it. Lord, but she's a good 'un. Whaur ye gaun?"

Me, I told him, "I'm for Tegucigalpa, and where yourself?"

"*Quién sabe*, chap? I started for there mysel', but ye never ken what's comin'." Easily he slid to the ground, saying, "I see ye'r' an auld han' an' I'll just follow yer example," lifting the skirts and preparing to slacken the girth.

But, in the fraction of a split second, the lazy, slow-moving Scot became a whirlwind. He shot through the air like a catamount, into the brush overhanging the road, and, after a violent thrashing in the brush, sallied forth, tranquilly smoking and dragging a big hulking native who grabbed futilely at the bushes in a vain and puerile attempt to stay proceedings.

I'VE seen lots of bully scraps, but never such as this. Too short by half. Oh, you ought to have seen the way he had that spiggoty! I really don't know just how he did have him—as the thing only lasted for the twinkling of a bedpost, but he brought him along like a grip-sack—with one hand—shirt-neck and pants-hems for the handle and Mr. Spiggoty doubled up and dragging. With what seemed only a gentle heave he deposited the brownie in the roadway and, placing a print where it would do most good, he straightened out the native, then, grabbing him by the slack, he stood him on his feet, the most utterly discomfited human it has been my luck to see.

All this time had been flowing from his lips a stream of the purest Anglo-Saxon, beautiful language, without a trace of brogue—the speech of a finished scholar and absolutely free from vulgarity or profanity. It was epochal—the transformation from slow Scot to lightning scholar. Meantime the face had hardened and the eyes narrowed, but lo! in a moment there again was the easy Scot.

"KEEP your eye on this gentleman, please, while I investigate," he murmured, stepping aside to the place of the recent tumult. Directly he returned with a Winchester, a Colt's .38 and a knife which—now don't believe it if you like and I won't blame you—was the clean spit of his own.

A slight smile rippled over the Scot's face as he tendered me the knife with the bow of a courtier, remarking, "The gods are propitious, evidently."

Man, I stood dumfounded. The thing was impossible—but there it was. Such a coincidence couldn't happen—but it had. There existed no two such knives—but there they were, and still are, and I stood with my mouth open like a ninny, plain gaping, gaping.

THERE'S no use going into particulars of the why and wherefore of those happenings as that would not interest you and your time is worth more than mine. You see I'm the boss here and do as I please.

There's really a whole litany to it. How I was carrying a many thousand in my kit and my *mozo* had jobbed and planned my taking off with the other. Scotty had by chance heard the plot and thus his appearance in the nick of time. Well, anyway, the thing sort of looked me up and I was seized later with a "Cacoethes Scribendi" and planned me a tale with Scotty the Sudden for a hero (he's a Secret Service man) and had fixed on my title as "Sudden Billy" when, by heck! out of a clear sky came a *Saturday Evening Post* with a tale entitled "Sudden Jim." What do you know about that? Of course my bubble burst, my divine afflatus departed, and again I just plain gaped.

I hope you've had the patience or, must I say, the courage, to get thus far and that some day you'll write and tell me you know I'm a liar. It's all I expect, and maybe it *was* a dream, but then how do you account for this? *Here's the knife.*—WM. C. ROBERTSON.

Rather than choke, as kindly suggested, I prefer to disburden myself. No doubt you fancy yourself as a psychologist. Well, you're not. I was going to tell you anyway. So there. Still, bear in mind that while by the letter of the law you did not seek this relation, by the spirit of the law be ye judged. You will not credit it. Cynic, who deem all men liars. Yet love to hear them lie. Well and good, be incredulous as you may. I'd rather be a credulous fool than an acidulated cynic. You already handed me the icy sneer about this very knife, so, when you read this, *Dios me guarda!*

Neither need nor reason have I to romance. When I write fiction I label it. This, though, is autobiography, not fiction.

THE knife disappeared, ruffling *bastante* a usually placid temper, the unruffled calm of a red-headed Scotchman. Many things were said, not permissible in the mails, not reproducable in type. Of course I knew 'twas stolen. Even knew by whom. To no avail was offered a reward of ten dollars for information—silence—not a whisper—none to claim the X. Hope glimmered and I consigned the whole occurrence to the limbo of things regrettable.

I AM in need of a roll-top desk and, it being *trabajosa* to bring such from the *estrangero* I propose making one. To this end I desire specially fine woods, water-seasoned at that, necessitating an exploring trip along the *playas* of the Rio Guayappe, which flows at my feet. Yearly the floods bring *maderas*, routed from their hiding-places in the sands of ages, and deposit them in the *remansas*, so one can sample and choose. I am partial to grenadilla, which, after long immersion in these irony waters, shows one grain orange and one purple. Lovely beyond imagining and susceptible of a very high polish—an ideal wood for furniture.

I set out, therefore, to find me a large grenadilla, seasoned of past ages, in a fit place for my sawyers to work upon. Soon several offered, but none to suit exactly. Any one good enough, but not just what I desired. There was an urge to keep on, always to the *playa* ahead, where I felt I'd find what I looked for. As the day slipped on this urge grew upon me, till on rounding a bed, Los Canales, I saw

Digitized by Google

a large log on the sands and knew my quest was over. Los Canales is a bad run of white water below a big pool which, on its placid surface, gives no indication of the tugging waters underneath.

NOW prepare yourself *alistase bien;* 'tis strong medicine, but—take it!!

Some poor devil, in the sultry noon, had need to cool himself, emptied his pockets on a rock, and, clad in cotton shirt and pants, sought the enticing depths of the placid pool where, doubtless, the current grasped him and swept him to his undoing in the smother of white water below.

On the rock were $15.85, a collar-button and—my knife.

Were an author to compose such a tale, who'd credit it? An artist dare not paint all that he sees in nature. The public would laugh, the critics jibe. There are things, Horatio, that merit *muckle thocht.*

WM. C. ROBERTSON.

DON'T forget our readers' annual vote for the best ten stories in *Adventure* during the year. Any one eligible to vote if he's read at least seven of the issues between January, 1917, and Mid-December, 1917, inclusive.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure's* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules,* thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure,* New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card—not* in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

Will sell: Any issue; 10 cents per copy.—P. H. HEICHEL, 106 N. Tarr Street, North Baltimore, Ohio.

Wanted: Nov., 1910. Will pay 35 cents for this issue if in good condition.—LEO BARKLEY, Morrisburg, Ont., Canada.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of about every five inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Adventurers' Club—No connection with this magazine, but data will be furnished by us. Can join only by attending a meeting of an existing chapter or starting a new chapter as provided in the Club's rules.

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. Entirely separate from Adventurers' Club, but, like it, first suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 731 Guardian Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

National School Camp Ass'n—Military and industrial training and camps for boys 12 or over. Address 1 Broadway, New York City.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—A similar organization coöperating with the N. S. C. A. (above). Address *Everybody's,* Spring and Macdougal, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Digitized by Google

Ask Adventure — **A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for Adventure Magazine by our Staff of Experts.**

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
S. B. H. HURST, Box 892, Seattle, Wash. ★Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Hursts.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N.Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3
Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. North American Snow Countries Part 1
C. L. GILMAN, 708 Oneida Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

11. ★North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

12. ★North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

13. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game; minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel: boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

15. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 397 Monadnock Bldg., San Francisco, Calif. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

16. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Sayville, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras,

★(*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached.*)

Digitized by Google

Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

17. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

18. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, care R. J. Neuman, 160 Seaman Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

19. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

20. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY, Remount No. 2, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

21. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

22. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

23. ★ The South Seas Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

24. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, care of H. E. ROBERTS, 55 John Street, New York, N. Y. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

Captain Lochwitzky is another of our "Ask Adventure" editors who has been called to the defense of our country. We hope you will be patient if answers from him are at times delayed.

Burma

Question:—"I have some photos from Burma showing water oxen treading out rice, oil wells on a rocky mountain. lake full of wate. lilies, etc., and wish to know more about the country.

(1) 'What are the mineral and vegetable resources of Burma? (2) Where are the petroleum wells located? (3) What about gold? (4) Animal life? (5) Rice? (6) Have the water lilies any commercial value? (7) What information have you about native life, high (Indian princes, etc.), as well as low? (8) What is the nature of the little strip of land next to Siam?"—J. R. HENDERSON, Miami, Okla.

Answer, by Mr. McCreagh:—I will take your questions up in their serial order.

(1) Mineral and vegetable resources? This is rather a large order, isn't it? I must refer you to the Encyclopaedia Britannica—or some similar work—for detailed information, and will answer briefly in this letter.

The chief mineral wealth of Burma comes from rubies. The mines at Mogok in Upper Burma are the most productive in the world and the best-colored stones come from there. The whole tract is leased out by the Government to the Ruby Mines Syndicate, which, in turn, grants licenses to individual operators. A license costs thirty dollars a month, and entitles the holder to dig anywhere he chooses—excepting in the middle of the road and in the tract that the Syndicate happens to be operating at the time. One may work for a week and turn out a fortune, or, on the other hand, he may work for years and only just pay expenses. It is all a matter of luck.

(2) Petroleum oil forms one of the major industries. The wells are situated at two points on the Irawadi River called Yenangyat and Yenangyung They are worked chiefly by Americans. There is an American community of about a hundred men at each place, and there exists between them a fierce rivalry in baseball teams.

(3) Burma also abounds in gold, which is got out of the river-beds by dredging, and also in coal. There are also the famous jade stone mines at Mogoung which furnish China with some fifty per cent. of the prized stones.

(4) Animal life? Burma is a splendid and virtually new big game country. You may find anything from chipmunks up to rhinosceri and elephants. The latter are so numerous that the government maintains an elephant catching, or "keddah" department in the country.

(5) About rice, I am sorry I can't give you any figures; but the industry is a very important one, and there is a large export to India. It is grown entirely by natives, who cultivate small plots and sell to contractors, who, in turn, supply the mills, which are owned mostly by English—and before the war German, concerns. Your photographs showing the water buffaloes treading out the grain are sure genuine. They depict a very familiar view of Burman life.

(6) Water lilies? Your photos probably show some of the great lotus ponds. I wouldn't be surprised if some of them were pictures of the moat round the fort at Mandalay. This is one of the most picturesque parts of that most picturesque city and therefore most often photographed. As far as I know the only commercial value that they have is the small sums obtained from their sale to devout people who offer them in lieu of sacrifices to the altars in the pagodas, for the Buddhistic teaching

Digitized by Google

maintains that flowers are most acceptable to the Almighty as symbolizing all that is purest on earth.

(7) Native life? I think that you are a trifle mixed when you ask about Indian princes and high and low native life.

After the annexation of Upper Burma and since the exile of King Theebaw from Mandalay there has been no native ruler. The deposed king has been deported to India, where he still lives as a royal prisoner; but many of the old ministers still live in Mandalay, though, of course, they have been stripped of all their power. There are no members of the royal family itself for the simple reason that Theebaw took the precaution of killing them all on his accession to the throne in order that there might be nobody to stir up rebellion against him. Sounds kind o' horrid, doesn't it? but it wasn't altogether his fault; he was nagged into it by his wife and his mother-in-law. However, as the great R. K. says, "that is another story."

(8) Finally, "that little strip next to Siam." It is known as the Mergui section. It is not over populated and of minor importance. In recent years several rubber plantations have been opened up there, and there is a considerable export of sponges of quite a good quality.

I hope I have given you the information you require; though, as I said in the beginning, it would take a book to answer all that you want to know fully.

Bermuda

Question:—(1) "Is it possible for the average man, with a family, to get a livelihood in the Bermudas? If so, at what?

(2) "What town would you advise me to locate in?

(3) "Is the climate very hot in Summer?

"I have a good education, can handle men, read a blue print, superintend a construction job and draw a fair plan and also handle tools. Have not very much money."—PRESTON THOMAS, Montreal, Canada.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—In Bermuda you have hit upon a place where conditions may be utterly changed after the war. As far as my experience serves, before hostilities commenced the chances of a newcomer gaining a livelihood, except in the hotel and general Summer-visitor catering lines, were slim. The islands are very small—inhabited portion something less than twenty miles, I believe—and naturally industries are limited both as to scope and variety. Such construction work as is done is scarcely extensive enough to offer constant employment to a resident. All this may change later, of course; but it is hardly probable that the volume of such work will increase, simply because the extent of available ground is not there.

One possibility exists which may prove useful, and if you care to first try it, and will advise me of your success or failure, I shall in the meantime gather more exhaustive data for you against hearing from you. On Ireland Island there is a large dockyard where ships of the British Atlantic and Canadian fleets get repairs. I think your stated qualifications will perhaps gain you at least consideration. Write to the Commanding Officer, Bermuda Naval Station, when you are ready, and state exactly what you can do, and apply as a British Colonial for employment.

To question 2, I can only reply that Hamilton is the chief and best town, but as for advising locating there, that of course depends entirely upon what work you get, and where. I am afraid you would find it hard to secure good employment there unless prepared to live there for some time and get acquainted first. You see, out of some eighteen thousand people on the group, more than one-third are colored; this means that the great bulk of employment is given to colored people, at colored people's wages.

As to query 3, this is the only query which can be answered absolutely to your satisfaction at this time. The climate is to my idea perfection, and most people who know the islands agree on that. It is never oppressively hot, even in Summer, and the situation of the islands is such—in the midst of the open ocean—that the air carries every element of health which all the inhabitants show.

California Harvest Season

Question:—"When does the harvest season begin in California and how far north do the crops extend? I am a machinist by trade but would like to get out into the open air. Are there many machine shops and auto repair shops on the coast?"—R. BYERS, Philadelphia.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—Harvest season begins early in July in California. They are always harvesting something, from February to December however. Grain harvest is July 1 to September 1, according to locality. Grain fields are found all the way from the Mexican line to the north end of British Columbia.

Machine shops and auto repair shops are thick. Auto work pays a better rate than machine shops, though the shipyard machinist gets a better rate than the ordinary. Any decent, willing worker can get all the farm work he wants along the coast, but he should pick the ranch where they do not hire Hindus or Japs.

By writing to the Chamber of Commerce in Los Angeles, San Francisco and the big northern cities like Seattle and Portland, asking for printed matter about ranching, you can get a host of pamphlets, illustrated, telling a lot about the coast.

Big Game in Korea

Question:—"What big game hunting is there in Korea? Are there any business opportunities there for a young man with a high-school education."—A. SANDERS, Alpine, Texas.

Answer, by Mr. Ritchie:—I should like to know how large you prefer your "big game" before answering this question and how good a shot you count yourself. For I'd hate to be responsible in the least for sending a possible amateur up against the best big game hunting in Asia—tiger shooting. Yes, the tiger shooting in the mountains of Korea is counted better than the sport in India or Burma; there are more tigers and they are far more savage than the Indian variety.

Digitized by Google

The Korean tiger is counted a "bad hombre" even by the best of shots. He is larger and heavier than his tropical cousin; his coloring is a dull tawney instead of the more brilliant orange of the Indian cat; his pelt is coarser and hair much longer. Since the Japanese have been in possession of the land and pursued their policy of disarming the natives the tigers have been on the increase; they now carry on frequent raids of small villages north of Seoul and the only native defense is to trap them in pitfalls.

One preparing to go tiger shooting had best outfit in Japan. Then crossing by rail and steamer to Seoul, one could get a guide there and horses to go back into the mountains, perhaps two days' trip. Besides tiger, one would very likely pick up a black bear; deer are plentiful as jackrabbits.

I regret I cannot answer your question about business opportunities as that is out of my line. I should say, generally speaking, that there was very small chance of an American's landing a job there. The Japanese have it all.

British Columbia

Question:—"We are two men, 29 and 25 years old, in fine health and have about $500 capital. We wish to spend a couple of years in British Columbia or some part of North America, trapping, hunting and prospecting.

"Will you give us information about the best place to go? We have had lots of experience in the Florida woods and glades, but no Northern experience."—J. R. LARRABEE, West Palm Beach, Fla.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—Since you two chaps seem to be the right sort and more in search of adventure and experience than anything else I am going to suggest that you hit the Cariboo country in central British Columbia. It is very doubtful if you come out with a million but I gather that you have no such delightful dreams, rather a sporting chance for a grub stake and an interesting trip being the object.

I am sending you a map with the territory of which I speak ringed with a pencil mark to aid you in finding it. Being a Government publication it may be taken as reliable although as a matter of fact this country is really in the raw being as yet practically unexplored to a great extent.

To get there you have excellent railway transporation to Ashcroft on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. From here take the stage to Barkville or 150-Mile House. When you get this far my advice would be to soak up all the local information you can get and be guided by that. This may also be obtained at Ashcroft or Hillooet.

Your previous experience will guide you as to what outfit you will require for whatever you may decide to do and all you need may be obtained when you get there thus doing away with a lot of customs formalities and other expenses and worries. The bunch around there will treat you right in the matter of prices, information and so forth.

As for game I may say that the big mule deer is everywhere, an insurance against actual hunger for fresh meat not to be despised. Grouse and prairie chickens are everywhere as well, while the lakes and rivers are swarming with duck and goose. As for fishing, I know of no place to beat it, especially for trout and the sizes they attain is something not to be told to any one who has never seen big ones. Black bear are plentiful, while caribou are also found and there is also an odd chance of mountain sheep and goat in the outlying parts. The fur consists of beaver, marten, muskrat, mink, skunk, some timber wolves and quite some coyotes. An occasional land otter may also be taken. In a word this is about as good a trapping country as any I know of.

As for placer mining—the poor man's proposition as it is called—I have it on very reliable authority that three years ago about half a million dollars in gold was brought out of this district by the placer miners. I have no later data but there is no reason for supposing that it is exhausted by any means. The district is too large and the entire country in that neck of the woods carries a large amount of mineral. It is also generally known that copper prospects are by no means uncommon as well as silver.

The climate ranges from 20 "below" in Winter (extreme range and of short duration) to 90 in the shade in Summer but it must be remembered that this is in the dry belt and these temperatures are more bearable than in the damper district where they would be more keenly felt. Being accustomed to the climate of Florida you would probably find the Cariboo a pleasant place to live in since being tempered to one extreme hardens a person for the reverse.

Down the Yellowstone By Boat

Question:—"Myself and another young man have in mind the following trip: to go from Sioux City by rail to some point on the Yellowstone River—say Miles City—and return to Sioux City via the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers. Is it possible to go down the Yelowstone from the above-mentioned point, or any other point, and, if so, what kind of a boat would we want? We intend having the boat made at the starting point, and using an outboard engine. Would we strike good fishing—especially trout—in the streams flowing into the Yellowstone and Missouri, also what other varieties of fish would we find in Montana and North Dakota?"—RAYMOND R. CLARK, Sioux City, Ia.

Answer, by Mr. Harrison:—I can say that your proposed trip is an entirely practicable project. I have met at least two men, river wayfarers, within the past few years who were making the trip when I saw them at Yankton, one being on his way from Billings, Mont., to St. Louis, and the other from, I think, Miles City to the Red River of the South, and I have often wanted to make the trip myself.

An outboard motor will be all right, if of a reliable make, though you will encounter some pretty swift water in places, especially along the Yellowstone. I should say an 18-foot hull, with as shallow a keel as possible, would give you and one other passenger ample room for your dunnage and a place to sleep on board when you wish to do so.

From Miles City down you should find plenty of water for navigation. You want to be particularly careful at the dams of the irrigation projects up there in Montana, particularly at the one near Glendive, 60 or 80 miles above the mouth; don't try to let your boat down over the spillway with ropes, because she'll smash up sure; get her into the boat channel which has been left around the dams and go down that way. Of course, living at Sioux City, on

Digitized by Google

the Missouri you know that you will have to be careful to avoid bars and high-water chutes on the Missouri; they are very annoying if you get hung up on them and sometimes it takes a lot of time and labor to get off again.

Below Miles City you will be pretty far down for any trout fishing; they are further west, toward the mountains. You will doubtless find some bass and, aside from them, the catfish, buffalo fish and other varieties which ordinarily frequent the Missouri, and its tributaries. If you go early in the Fall, you ought to get some good shooting along the shore and back on the bluffs.

Middle-West Homesteads

Question:—"What are the chances for a young fellow to homestead in Montana or Minnesota? Is there any good land yet open for settlement? Could one earn any money during the Winter months trapping and hunting? What kind of game is there and is it plentiful? What chance for employment during spare time?

"I am considering the purchase of a .256 Newton rifle. Do you think it is the equal of the new Springfield for large game such as bear and moose?" —L. J. VINING, Neodesha, Kan.

Answer, by Mr. Gilman:—Homesteading in Minnesota, and I presume in Montana, is simply a matter of accepting a piece of government land so far from the railroad that it has not been taken, and hanging on to it until the growth of the country catches up with it and makes it valuable.

As we homesteaders in northern Minnesota used to put it, "the U. S. Government bets you 160 acres of land against $7.50 that you can't live on it five years without starving to death." This sums up the rules of the game pretty well. For actual details as to vacant lands write to the General Land office, Washington, D. C., for lists of vacant government lands in the states named. A letter to the State Commissioner of Immigration, State Capitol, St. Paul, will bring you much valuable information about Minnesota lands in general. Montana may have a similar State bureau; it's worth betting a two-cent stamp on the chance.

Regarding the .256 Newton rifle. I have examined, but have not shot this rifle. Mechanically I would say that it is a well-made arm, combining very ingeniously most of the best points of the Mauser and Ross actions. Ballistically the .256 Newton cartridge is a very plausible advance along the line of development clearly indicated by the .30 U. S. '06, .280 Ross and .250—3000 Savage cartridges. The new Springfield, .30 U. S. '06, loaded with the expanding point spitzer-shape bullets offered by nearly all ammunition companies is a load hard to beat either for accuracy, low trajectory and killing power. I should prefer it to the .256 Newton, which outclasses it on paper, simply because it is a cartridge more generally obtainable upon the market.

Far-West Homesteads

Question:—"Is there any government land open to homesteaders in northern Washington? Is there any work there for farm hands?"—WILLIS T. TODD, San Ysidro, Cal.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Homestead lands may only be located now by a careful scrutiny of the records and a search among the lands already filed on. They are scarce in any place but desert land. I would advise you to write to the Federal land office in Seattle and to the district forester there. Some small allotment may have been overlooked and still open.

One of my friends just got 82 acres in Mill Creek Cañon, South California, that way.

Farm labor is usually in good demand in Washington. Two young men of my acquaintance went there and said they had dozens of chances to get work. The chances should be especially good this Summer, on account of the war having increased acreage and decreased the men.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ADVENTURE HAS FOUND ONE MAN IN FIVE ASKED FOR DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS.

SULLIVAN, ERIC, when last heard from him was bomb instructor with Seaforth Highlanders in Victoria, B. C. About 5 ft. 10 ins., ruddy complexion, and went through the Mexican border campaign with me. Is probably at present with some of the Canadian regiments in France. An anxious to locate him as I have important news. Any information concerning him or definite news of his death or capture will be appreciated.—Address PVT. JACK WRIGHT, Co., "C" 5th Calif. Inf., No. 2808 Oak Terrace, Berkeley, Calif.

WILLIAMS, COVERT P. Your brother wants to know where you are. Your whereabouts will be held strictly confidential by me if you so desire.—Address P. E. WILLIAMS, 359 Decatur St., Atlanta, Ga.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

DARLINGTON, CHAS. H. Last heard of in San Francisco, Calif., in March, 1911. Was a member of Madero's Foreign Legion in 1911. His old pal would like to hear from him before sailing for France with the U. S. Marines.—Address SIDNEY SEVERNS, Martinez, Calif. Box 211.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

Digitized by Google

DE VEROY, LESLIE, used to soldier in Co. B. and Co. M., 8th U. S. Inf., in 1907 to 1910, Monterey, Calif. I served in Co. D, 8th U. S. Inf., from 1907 to 1910. Members of 8th U. S. Inf. knowing his whereabouts please notify me.—Address MANUEL M. JOSEPH, Territorial Messenger Service, Honolulu, T. H.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

STEPHENSON, "BOB," brother. Last address Fargo, N. D. Short, 130 lbs., blue eyes, brown hair and a flat nose.—Address MARGARET STEPHENSON, 1330 South Grant St., Denver, Colo.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-October or First November issues of *Adventure*. They can get name of inquirers from this magazine.

BASKER, Lewis; Borden, Irene; Campbell, Arthur; Dunn, J. G.; Fodder, "Fat"; Footsie, Usher; Ford, Ed. W.; Hammer, Charles; Heinze or Hanies; Lackey, Phoenix A.; Lawver, I. H.; Marshall, Charles N.; Olson, John; Page, Donald W.; Payne, W. J.; Phillips, Wm. L.; Ramsey, Fitch W. or Voet Fitch; Terrusse, L. S.; Tuggle, Will S.; Watson, E. E.; White, John S.; Wilhelm, George Washington.

MISCELLANEOUS—Men who took part in Honduras expedition of 1888.

HASTLAR GAL BREATH, Bertha Wilkins Starkweather.

NUMBERS L. T., 284, C 293, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address HARRY EDWIN WADE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Eleven stories, all up to *Adventure* standard, will appear in the First-December issue, in your hands November 3d. In addition to those mentioned on page 2 are the following:

THE ISLAND OF CHANGING SHAPES *By H. A. Lamb*

A South Sea island of belligerent-living natives may strike you as being the last word in adventure. But read this tale of an island whose natives are dead and stuffed—and see what you think.

THE SIX SILK SHIRTS OF SILVER SAM *By J. Allan Dunn*

A silk shirt makes a cowpuncher look gay—no doubt about it. But sometimes it may act as a hoodoo, as this tale will tell you.

BLUE WOLF *By Arthur James Hayes*

The story of a dog's loyalty and all that it means to lonesome prospectors in the frozen North.

RUGGED SONS OF THE WOODS *By Henry Oyen*

Pete Boileau and *Spike Carlson* are just plain loggers. But to a certain visitor from the city each becomes "my good man" and "a rugged son of the woods." Read what *Pete* and *Spike* think about it.

WHEN OLD GLORY CALLED *By Hapsburg Liebe*

The native pride of a Tennessee mountain boy is hard hit by army discipline. This tale of army life in the Philippines will tell you what came of it.

THE MISFIT BECOMES CHAPERON *By William H. Hamby*

Simplex Cox merely wants a job, which he finds, and a good bit of trouble as well.

HIRA SINGH'S TALE A Four-Part Story. Conclusion. *By Talbot Mundy*

These loyal Indian troopers fight their way to the wild roof of the world. And great adventures befall them.

THE HUNGRY CRYSTAL *By Hugh Pendexter*

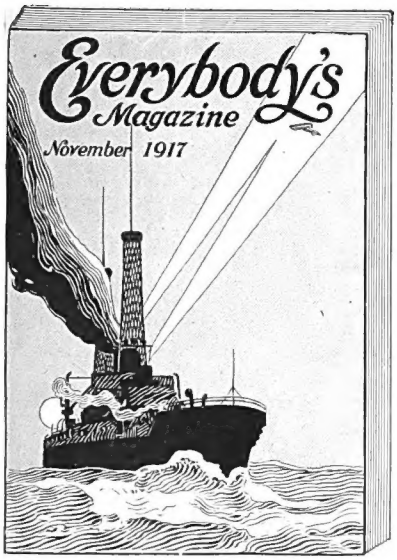
Follow the author of "Kinnikinnick" and "The Bearer of Belts," along another old Indian trail.

THE STRANGER *By Fred T. Barton*

If you wish to know the meaning of "the queer," ask a U. S. Secret Service agent—or read this story of the doings around "Mike's Place."

FIRST-DECEMBER ADVENTURE

Digitized by Google



A NEW MAGAZINE

New in form, size, style and attractiveness, with bigger pages and a lot more of them, more stories, more color work, more illustrations, more war features.

THE magazine is EVERYBODY's for November, on sale October 23d. The new book is big in size and big in quality.

In the November issue, Henry Kitchell Webster, author of "The Real Adventure," begins "The White Arc," a big serial story of present-day American life.

"Congo," a remarkable story of jungle and circus tent, by Courtney Ryley Cooper, is complete in this number.

Samuel Hopkins Adams contributes "Room '12A,'" a story that is recommended without reservation to all readers of "ADVENTURE."

More interesting than most fiction is "Tam o' the Scoots," the actual war experiences of a daring Scotch aviator.

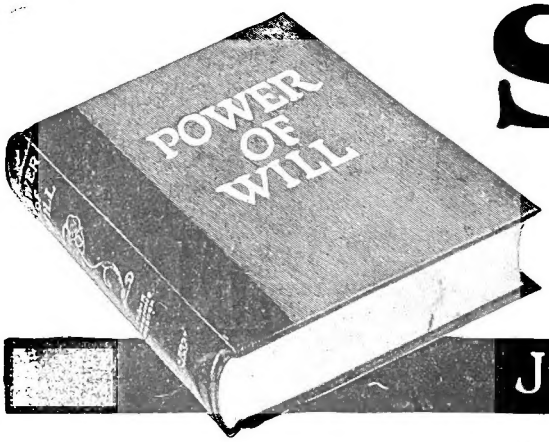
There is humor—plenty of it—by Oliver Herford and others. Four full-page paintings, two of them war pictures, are printed in color.

Enough more stories, articles and illustrations to fill an ordinary magazine make notable the November issue of

Everybody's

Fifteen cents a copy from your news-dealer

Digitized by Google



Sent Free

Just Mail Coupon

A Maker of Millions —and Millionaires

Don't miss this rare offer—the greatest opportunity that ever has come to you. Take no chances. Do not risk delay. This unparalleled offer may not appear again. Fill out the coupon and mail it NOW. We will send you at once, absolutely free for examination, the most remarkable book of recent years—the most sensational success in the whole history of books. In this small space we cannot begin to explain what this amazing book will do for you—how it will turn your feet into the straight and sure road to success and riches. In the panel at the right are just a few of the thousands of words of praise written to us by persons who have read the book.

No matter who you are or where you are—no matter if you have made some progress or none at all toward financial independence—you need this book. And while this offer lasts it costs you nothing—not one penny—to see it and read it and to learn for yourself its priceless secrets. "Power of Will" is not like any other book you ever saw or read—entirely new and different—the first practical, thorough, systematic course in will training ever produced.

Other men get rich, and they do not kill themselves in the struggle either. You can make money, you can win success just as easily as they when you know how—when you have read the simple secret of their method.

Extraordinary Offer

You may never have such a chance again. Act now! It has long been known that the will can be trained into a wonderful force for achieving. But only a few men have learned for themselves, unaided, how to train their will-power and cultivate it. Now comes Haddock, who has perfected a simple, systematic course of training by which YOU can develop an indomitable, irresistible Will based on a most profound and scientific analysis of human character.

"Power of Will" has pulled thousands out of the slough of despondency and set them on the road to success and prosperity. It will do the same for you. Young and old men alike testify to the almost magical changes in their lives after reading this great book, written by a scholar whose name ranks with such leaders of thought as James, Bergson and Royce.

SEND NO MONEY

If you miss this great opportunity you will surely regret it. We will simply be flooded with requests as soon as this advertisement appears. But if you act quickly and mail the coupon today you can be sure of receiving a copy of this amazing book for free examination. "Power of Will" contains 400 pages, half leather, gold-top leaves and includes more material than many correspondence courses selling at $25.00. Fill out the attached coupon. Send no money. Keep the book for five days. Then mail it back if you are not satisfied that it is worth its weight in gold to you. Or, if you want to own it, simply send us $3.00, our Low Introductory Price, and it is yours. Send NOW, before you forget.

Pelton Pub. Co.
48-T Wilcox Blk.
Meriden, Conn.

Gentlemen:—Please send me a copy of "Power of Will" on approval. I agree to remit $3.00 or remail the book in five days.

Name .....

Address .....

PELTON PUBLISHING CO.
48-T Wilcox Block, MERIDEN, CONN.

Personal Experiences

Among 200,000 users of "Power of Will" are such men as Judge Ben B. Lindsey; Supreme Court Justice Parker; Wu Ting Fang, ex-U. S. Chinese Ambassador; Assistant Postmaster General Britt; Lieut. Gov. McKelvie of Nebraska; General Manager Christeson of Wells-Fargo Express Co.; E. St. Elmo Lewis, former Vice-Pres. Am. Metal Construction Co.; Gov. Ferris of Michigan, and many others of equal prominence.

Here are just a few extracts from the thousands of voluntary letters from owners telling what the book has meant to them.

800% Increase in One Year

"I recommended 'Power of Will' to a young man and his salary has increased 800% within a year."—*W. M. Taylor, Efficiency Expert, Willys-Overland Co.*

$1,500 to $50,000 Yearly

"Three years ago I was making $1500 a year and working day and night. Today I make $1000 a week and have time for other things as well. To the lessons in the book, 'Power of Will,' do I owe this sudden rise."—*(Name on request.)*

Worth $3,000 to $30,000

"From what I have already seen I believe I can get $3,000 to $30,000 worth of good out of it."—*C. D. Van Vechten, Gen. Agent North Western Life Insurance Co., Cedar Rapids, Ia.*

$897 Profit First Week

"'Power of Will' is a compilation of mighty forces. My first week's benefit in dollars is $900—cost $3; profit $897."—(Figure what his yearly profit would be.)—*F. W. Heistand, 916 Tribune Bldg., Chicago, Ill.*

Another 50% Increase

"More than a year ago I purchased 'Power of Will' and I firmly believe that it—and it alone—has enabled me to increase my salary more than 50% in that time."—*L. C. Hudgens, Principal Mayhew Consolidated Schools, Roswell, Okla.*

Digitized by Google